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VIEWS A.11 • TV/ TEXT 2828

When first ladies were . . .

By Fe Zamora

ASA politician's wife, Lut Ramona Magsaysay was a reluctant public figure. But unlike her husband's baronial President, she played the part of first la-

PHILIPPINE DAILY
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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

DENR test for metro air quality: Check your collar

By Nob Cunanan and Marlet P. Miaffi

TS BREATHE so we're breathing easy, that's the question. Environment Metro Manila, many of them bike to the bars from pondering the difference

Wednesday, August 17, 2004 • 36 pages | vol. 19 / no. 332

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Tax credit row imperils revenue bills

BOC exec not new to controversy

By Armand N. Nocum

AN OFFICIAL of the Bureau of Customs, who is being blamed for the dismissal by various regional trial courts of collection cases against companies with fraudulently acquired tax credit certificates (TCCs), is no stranger to charges of causing the government to lose millions of pesos in revenue.

Tax credits are refund payments made by the government on the excise and taxes paid by exporters exemptions for imported materials that they use. TCCs, which are transferable under certain conditions, can be used to settle tax obligations.

By Christine O. Avendaño, Cynthia D. Balana and Armand N. Nocum

THE DISMISSAL of collection cases filed by the Bureau of Customs against companies that fraudulently acquired tax credit certificates (TCCS) totalling P1 billion has given legislators ammunition in opposing proposals to impose new taxes.

"If this is the way we are handling cases of government for its losses from tax abuses why should we burden our people with new taxes?" Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said yesterday after the Senate approved that various regional trial courts had dismissed 15 cases because of the BOC's lack of interest to prosecute.

Senate majority floor leader Francisco "Kit" Tatad, who investigated the tax credit scams in the Senate in 1999, said it would be "unfair" to the people if government would enact taxes and squeeze money from them "to subsidize this fraudulent business."

He asked the Senate to conduct an inquiry into why the cases filed by the government against companies with fraudulently acquired TCCs ended up being dismissed in court. He will

league in the House of Representatives also called for a probe.

But Malacañang shrugged off its pitchal record in its legal battle against corporations that misuse TCCs.

"The government is determined to prosecute tax evaders to the hilt. We don't have some enclaves but we will continue pushing the tough," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye at a briefing.

"TCCs are refund payments made by the government on the excise and taxes paid by export enterprises for imported materials that they use.

Instead of a cash refund, the One Stop Shop Inter-agency Tax Credit and Duty Drawback Center (OSS), which was created in 1992, issues TCCs which the companies use to settle their tax obligations. Of the three kinds of tax refunds, only the value-added tax refunds were fraudulent, they discovered.

DANCING BLOSSOMS

The streets of Davao City burst into colors that the rains failed to wash away during the city's celebration of the annual Kadayawan sa Dabaw festival. Street performers, like these students, turned the city's roads into a stage to thank the heavens for the bountiful harvest.

NPA set to free 2 soldiers today

By Clarissa V. Siguenza and PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SGT. CI six months pregnant but she is ready to walk miles just to see him free again.

"I can't wait to see him," the wife of Army Lt. Ronaldo Palabay told the reporters yesterday. "Because of my pregnancy, I can't eat. Sad that I'm pregnant."

Leah Palabay's bags are packed and she is ready to go.

So is Mariano Sumalo, brother of PFC Reinel Sumalo.

Reinel, together her security six months by the Communist New People's Army, Sumalo and Reinel are scheduled to be freed by the guerrilla somewhere in Bicol today.

Smokey Mountain agreement terminated in August last year

By Fe Zamora

THE JOINT venture agreement between the government and R.E Builders Inc. to develop the Smokey Mountain garbage dump into a residential community was actually terminated last year, according to a memorandum of agreement dated Aug. 17, 2003, and signed by the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the developer.

With the termination, the government said it would pay humanitarian claims to R.E Builders P200 million, supposedly in partial settlement of expenses incurred since the project began in 1995. A three-hectare portion of the 17-hectare Vitas relocation area, Tondo will also be transferred to the corporation as part of its compensation or "developer's fee."

But the agreement signed by NHA general manager Edgardo Bautista and R.E Builders president Leopoldo Sanchez stated that the P200 million would be held in escrow at the Land Bank of the Philippines and would be paid to the corporation after a validation process.

The balance of the P1.45 billion in expenses being claimed by R.E Builders would be settled in cash or bonds by the government thereof." The amount would be determined after a validation process, the document also said.

The P200 million was part of a P460-million fund ordered released by President Macapagal-Arroyo to construct the Smokey Mountain Development and Reclamation Project, which had been at a standstill since 1998 for lack of funds.

The P460-million fund was approved by the Cabinet on July 30, 2003, for placement in the Smokey Mountain Asset Pool (SMAP) on condition that the government would substantially cancel the original agreement dated March 10, 1995, and other collateral documents with R.E Builders.

The SMAP with Home Insurance Guarantee Corp. and Philippine National Bank as trustee, was formed in 1994.

The termination of the contract with R.E Builders was in keep pace

Rare bird found on Babuyan isle

THE LOCALS only a few were Filipino and British wildlife researchers and they had discovered what appeared to be a rare, new species of flightless bird on the tiny island of Calayan, the largest island in the Babuyan island group that lies between Batanes and Luzon.

The bird, in the called the "Calayan Rail," is the size of a small crow and has dark brown plumage and bright-orange red legs and beak, said Filipino conservationist Carl Oliveros, who helped lead the expedition that found it.

WILL the Calayan Rail go the way of the dodo?

ADIEU

Priests celebrate the 9th of nephew Juan C. Aguado, husband of NQUIRER columnist Ana Cuyegkeng O. Aguado and one of the original incorporators of this newspaper, during a requiem Mass at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park. Aguado's ashes were interred yesterday at the church angel.

NO PROBABLE CAUSE?

Prosecutor dismisses criminal charges vs Jaworski sons, foes

By Luigi A. del Puerto

THE NEXT tech are different from you and me, F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote.

Yes, fellow Americans writer Ernest Hemingway supposedly retorted, they have more money.

Or is it because they are smoothalks?

The Mandaluyong Prosecutor's Office has dismissed the criminal charges filed by the police in June against the sons of true wealthy families in Metro Manila, according to a resolution obtained by the business yesterday.

Ryan Jaworski, Ron Michael Jaworski, Elton Yap, Mark Yap and several John Does were accused of looting the area behind the Solaire Restaurant in East Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, over a virtual riot scene on the evening of June 27.

The Jaworskis are brothers to Pasig City Rep. Robert "Bobby" Jaworski Jr. and sons of former senator and basketball legend Robert Jaworski.

The Yaps belong to the family of a rich Metrobalcoong businessman.

Although police said they could not confirm it, they said they believed the shoot-out was sparked by a quarrel over unconfirmed facts on the results of the National Basketball Association (NBA) Finals, supposedly watching in thousands of people.

They said they believed the incident is connected to robbery from Elton Yap, who allegedly owed a schoolmate money from the betting. The schoolmate supposedly had asked someone on the side of the Jaworskis for help in collecting his winnings.

In dismissing the charges of alarm and scandal, illegal discharge of firearms and malicious mischief, Prosecutor Ernesto C. Sanagustin said the pa-

A2
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

'Reward OK but we want justice'

ILOILO CITY—While they welcomed the P5-million reward offered for information on the killers of journalists, the families of the victims and media organizations said only decisive government action would bring justice to the victims.

"Capturing the killers inside the prisons and concerted effort of the government and law-enforcement agencies," said Jose Maree Nava, the son of Josef Nava, editor-publisher of the Iloilo City-based news magazine "Bisayan Life Today" who was killed in October 1987.

But family Linda said the reward offer could strengthen the chances of her husband Rolando's murderer being solved.

"Maybe this time my prayers will be answered," she said in a telephone interview. Rolando, program director of DYFM affiliate DYSB radio in Kidapawan, was gunned down in January 2003.

Nava and Linda are among the 55 journalists killed since 1986 whose murder remained unsolved. Six journalists have been killed so far this year.

Today Xaptista Nimata, national chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, said the offer of a reward would help boost the price of hired guns but would not stop the killings.

"What is needed is solid police work to arrest, prosecute and convict the killers," she said.

Nimata said the NUJP and other media organizations were willing to cooperate with the police to help solve the murders. NUJP officers held a dialogue with Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Oscar Calderon on Monday.

Agliipay directed police units to form special composed of 10 policemen each to look into each of the unsolved murders and bare down the suspects.

Despite the increased bounty, the International Federation of Journalists, which has a membership of 600,000 worldwide, said government efforts to curb the rising death toll among journalists appeared to have failed.

"It is time a strong and simple message was sent to all—that shooting journalists will not be tolerated and those who commit these crimes will be found and brought to justice," said IFJ president Christopher Warren in an e-mailed statement dated Aug. 16.

"The toll continues to mount and the failure to bring people to justice now stands as a shocking indictment of the authorities. It is time for that to change," said Warren.

In Cagayan de Oro City, four media practitioners started their three-day hunger but on Monday, Aug. 8, to push for the reward offer.

Cagayan de Oro Press Club president Jerry Ocnilla, historian Cagayan de Oro photojournalist Jerry Hamalatan, dxCO Radyo Pilipinas station manager Jesus Ramamonte and dxCO commentator Ronnie Monteron have decided to take only tomato and water during the fast.

Various media organizations, which formed an alliance named "Silencing the Media," are set to hold workshop activities in Cagayan de Oro City. There will be nightly vigils and a march only on Saturday, the 27th anniversary of the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr.

Hospicio Sto. Rosario "Boy" Morilla Jr. yesterday offered his P600,000 salary from his TV show "Sisi ko si Kuya" as a reward for information that would lead to the arrest of those behind the journalist killings.

Morilla, who joins private lawyers' caucus in the TV show, said he will also still coordinate with media organizations to "establish the guidelines and criteria for the release of the reward to whistle blowers." *Reuben D. Buergo Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau with reports from Grace Castel-Alberto, PDI Mindanao Bureau, and Christine Avendaño, Metro Manila*

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Might newsman have been saved?

GENERAL SOTON CITY—His wife Lush was in tears and pleading with the staff at the General Santos Doctors Hospital to save the life of GMA Super Radyo reporter Jonathan Abayon.

But they ignored her.

The hospital, run by St. Paul Sisters, was demanding a deposit of P50,000, an amount Abayon's family could not produce immediately.

Daniel Degaris, another GMA Super Radyo reporter here and a close friend of Abayon's, talked to a Ms. Marilou-something, supposedly the hospital's billing supervisor.

Marilou-something stressed that it was hospital policy to ask for a deposit. He suggested that Degaris act as a guarantor for Abayon and his family.

"I told Ms. Marilou-something Abayon was an employee of GMA Super Radyo and the company would shoulder the expenses once he was due in the line of duty," Degaris said. "I couldn't sign as guarantor because I was just an ordinary employee, so I told my station manager."

Station manager Christopher Cuesta went straight to the hospital and signed as guarantor.

Meanwhile, Abayon's chances of survival got slimmer.

Lush told the hospital that all this time her husband was in the emergency room with only two hospital staffers, Boots, operating a device which sucked blood from his mouth.

Based on the report aired by GMA Super Radyo, Abayon was brought to the hospital at 4 a.m. on Aug. 8. He was wheeled into the operating room only at 7:30 a.m.

The operation ended at 3 p.m. He was brought to the intensive care unit but died 20 hours later on Aug. 9 at 11:20 a.m.

Again, the hospital demanded immediate payment of the bill before they would release Abayon's remains. And again, Cuesta signed a promissory note stating that the bills would be settled in two weeks' time.

The hospital released the body four hours later.

The heavens tried to arouse hospital administrator Lucy Aseriby Sumilo to her senses. The staffer who took the call and humiliated was unavailable and declined to give a statement.

Agustin Z. Evasco, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Rape rap against Osmeña junked

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has dismissed the rape charge filed by an admitted male sex worker against former Sen. John Osmeña for lack of probable cause.

In a four-page resolution, Senior State Prosecutor Emilio M. Medalla Jr. de los Santos noted that neither the complainant, Diego Gomez, nor his lawyer attended the preliminary investigation of the case despite the subpoenas sent to them. They also never gave an explanation for their absences.

"Such motion on his part evokes the merits of the claims," De los Santos said.

Gomez had claimed that Osmeña raped him on a Tagaytay City hotel on Feb. 1, 2004. He was allegedly paid P15,000 for his services.

Osmeña had dismissed the charge as "pure and simple harassment" since he was running for reelection at the time. He lost in the May 10 elections, however.

In dismissing the charge, De los Santos also gave weight to Senate records which showed that Osmeña was present at the Senate on Feb. 1.

Philip C. Tubeza

3 killed as gov't troops, MILF rebels clash

By Alcuin Papa

GOVERNMENT troops clashed with Moro Islamic Liberation Front separatist rebels in Maguindanao yesterday, hurting two guerrillas and one soldier dead and breaching a cease-fire agreement just days before exploratory peace talks were scheduled to open.

Reports reaching Camp Apolinario said the clash occurred in Barangay Capinpinan, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao at about 9:00 a.m. yesterday, between the MILF and troops from the Mobilizing Division.

Armed Forces spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lasoro said a group of soldiers, police and government militia was investigating the killing of two civilians in the town when they were fired upon by the rebels.

"We hope that this incident won't derail the ongoing peace process. We are doing our best actually to prevent these things from happening. Schemes are already being implemented on the ground to prevent any escalation of this conflict," Lasoro said.

He said it was the first clash with the rebels since mid-2003. He said the government troops were unaware that there were MILF rebels in the town.

Lasoro said the incident has been reported to the MILF representative to the coordinating committee on the cessation of hostilities (CCCH) by Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano, the AFP representative to the CCCH.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the clash occurred was connected to a family feud within the predominantly Muslim community, which may have involved some MILF members and government militia.

"This has no bearing at all [on the peace talks] unless the military blows it out of proportion," Kabalu told AP.

The government and the MILF signed a cease-fire agreement in 1997 but negotiators are still working on a political settlement to end the clashes that have killed thousands.

In 2002, the countries signed in 2002 strengthened the first cease-fire agreement.

Since then, specials clashes in central Mindanao have marred the truce line.

In 2000, the Estrada administration launched an all-out war against the rebels, resulting in the takeover of 46 MILF camps by the military and ending all formal peace negotiations.

On Monday, government officials and MILF leaders asserted upbeat about prospects for peace, saying the MILF's cooperation in the military operation last week that probably killed Sanggaco Kidnap-for-ransom gang leader Tatoy Idamay and 11 of his men have bolstered peace efforts.

Kabalu went so far as to indicate that peace talks would resume in Kuala Lumpur as early as this week. With a report from Charlie C. Arbasa, Nhel Mindanao Bureau

Pinay OFW defies ban, sneaks into Iraq

By TJ Burgonio

A FILIPINO overseas worker, defied by her Jordanian employer, managed to slip into Iraq this month despite the existing ban on the deployment of workers to the war-torn country, a foreign affairs official said yesterday.

Undersecretary Rosario Manalo said the woman was among 12 Filipinos who entered Iraq from Jordan in violation of the ban.

Manalo, however, was alarmed by her employer in Baghdad even before she could start work. Luckily, she found her way to the Philippine embassy there with the help of an American soldier, Undersecretary Jose Brillantes said.

"Suddenly she couldn't find the employer and she was left abandoned in Baghdad. She eventually found her way to the Philippine embassy after she approached an American soldier," Brillantes said at a briefing.

Gay will be repatriated to Manila this week, said Brillantes, undersecretary for migrant workers affairs.

Pending her repatriation, the foreign affairs department has sought an investigation into the circumstances of her entry into Iraq, and asked the embassy there, as well as in Jordan to locate her employer, Al Abdul Rahman, for possible prosecution.

"We are asking the Philippine embassy in Iraq, together with the Philippine embassy in Amman, Jordan, to locate and find the employer so we can take the necessary steps to represent the interest of Filipino domestic helpers and for justice in this particular case," Brillantes said.

Gay's entry into Iraq alarmed officials because it showed that Filipinos could still get there despite the ban on the deployment of workers.

"There is some form or a system of entry that puts Filipinos in danger... This is something that we should look into," he said.

The Philippines had forged agreements with Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to prevent Filipinos from driven from countries their borders into Iraq.

Asked if there was a need to compel the parties to include Filipino domestic helpers in view of Gay's case, Brillantes said: "I would think so. The POEA (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration) is taking the necessary action."

Books on media launched

WHY ARE the media star-struck? Why do they focus too much on celebrities and conflict? Why does media reporting tend to be superficial?

Three books on the media to be launched today by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and the Center for Media Freedom (CMFR) will attempt to answer these questions. The launching, at 9:30 a.m., at the Ateneo Professional Schools at Rockwell, Makati, will also feature a panel discussion with the book authors and media experts.

"News for Sale: The Corruption and Commercialization of the Philippine Media" by Chay Florentino Hofilena documents bribe-giving and other forms of wrongdoing in the press, focusing on the new forms of corruption that emerged in the coverage of the 2004 elections.

The second book, "Civil-Right, Bureaucrat, Boxing Match (Why Elections are Covered as Sport)," explains why election coverage is superficial, personality-oriented and focused on conflict, authored by PCIJ's Sheila S. Coronel, the book also looks at the factors that influence the direction of election reporting.

The third book, "Citizen's Media Monitor: A report on the Campaign and Elections Coverage in the Philippines," presents the results of the CMFR's content analysis of media reports of major TV networks and broadsheets during the 2004 elections.

For more information, interested parties may contact marketing@pcij.org or call 929-7071.

'Overpopulation doesn't cause poverty'

By Marvin P. Mortell and Blanche S. Rivera

GROUPS opposed to birth control yesterday said it was not true that large populations breed poverty since countries with large populations were generally more prosperous.

They said the real problem could reside in overcrowded countries like the Philippines was governance.

"Population control is a wrong solution. It is not true that population is the cause of poverty," said Dr. Angelita Aguinaldo of Doctors for Life, addressing a population forum (video) day.

The Philippines has 82 million people, making it the 12th most populous country in the world.

Aguinaldo said the Philippines could become prosperous with "proper leadership, proper governance, the right economic priorities" and if corruption was eliminated.

"Why is Japan richer? ... Countries with bigger populations have greater body power," she said, speaking in Filipino and English.

Japan, with a population of 127.3 million, has a population density of 331 per sq km compared to the Philippines' 197 per sq km against total land area of 377,835 sq km and 300,000 sq km, respectively.

Another member of Doctors for Life, Victoria Elizalde, noted that the Philippines' fertility rate of 4 per woman in the 1970s had been brought down to 3.0.

"Did we go rich? Did we improve? Overpopulation is not the primary cause of poverty. ... It's more than a United Nations study said that 30 percent of our budget goes to corruption and most of our budget goes to debt payments," she said.

Aguinaldo argued that it was not population growth that brought about prosperity but that prosperity that slowed down population growth.

In America and some European countries where population control is actively practiced, the government are now trying to encourage women to bear children, she said.

Aguinaldo said that some of those Western countries are now legislating a decline in population and are now studying closing.

Allen Bay, Edcel Lagman, who was at the forum, explained his proposal to reduce the population by offering incentives to families with two children or less. Lagman's so-called "two-child policy" bill is being opposed by Church and pro-life groups.

Lagman urged the people to read and read his proposed bill's "open minds," adding that misunderstandings have been attached to the bill.

In a related development, a population expert has warned that the cuts of abortion would increase in the next few years because women are unable to plan the size of their families.

Junice Melgar, former executive director of the UP Population Institute, said the women likely to abort their babies were not the young, unprepared mothers but those aged 40 to 44 who had an essential progeniture.

"Many Black Out" abortions are done mostly by young women, for it's actually the older women who no longer want children but get pregnant who abort their babies," Melgar, country coordinator of the non-government organization Forum for Family Planning, told a population seminar at the Asian Social Institute on Monday.

Abortion is illegal in the Philippines, but health agencies estimate that there are at least 300,000 abortions in the country every year.

"Our concern is the unmet need for family planning, which is still not being addressed, therefore a the establishment of donor agencies giving contraceptives," Perez said.

Etta files bill to raise status of gays, lesbians

A PARTYLIST congresswoman yesterday sought to correct the "second-class status" of lesbians and gays in society by filing a bill that would define and penalize practices prejudicial to members of the homosexual community.

Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann "Etta" Rosales said House Bill No. 4364, or the Anti-Discrimination Act, seeks the final recourse, would penalize the most deliberate instances of discrimination, particularly those activities based on "sexual orientation and gender identity, whether actual or perceived."

Rosales, chair of the House committee on human rights, said the passage of the bill would bring to an end the "unjust and unfair treatment of homosexuals in our government agencies and in our private sector."

"The Philippines is a signatory to numerous international agreements that seek to ensure respect for the human rights of all persons, regardless of sex or sexual orientation or any other condition. But in this country, gays and lesbians are still considered second-class citizens," she said.

The bill, filed a month ago, "discrimination by any person, natural or judicial, to deny access to public service such as welfare service, medical and other health services, the use of establishments, facilities or services, including housing, open to the general public, by any person, on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender."

Likewise, it would be unlawful to include certain information and gender identity as the criteria for the hiring, promotion and dismissal of workers, and in the determination of employee compensation, training, assignments, privileges, benefits or allowances.

Cynthia Balana

RP, China join forces vs illegal drugs

By Nelson Parco Ramos

THE PHILIPPINES and China have agreed to exchange vital information on illegal drug operations which could lead to more drug busts here as more drug traffickers arrested in the country were Chinese, according to Undersecretary Jose Calida, executive director of the Dangerous Drugs Board.

The Chinese government's cooperation in our anti-drugs operation would surely have a positive impact," he said.

The new agreement follows an earlier one between then Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. and the NCB in August 2003 under which the two countries agreed to conduct joint intelligence and to set up workplaces for the PDEA in Beijing and for the NCB in Manila.

The new agreement involves, among other things, the updating of data concerning drug syndicates operating in China and the exposes, said Calida.

He said he used the conference to debunk international perception that the Philippines had become a major manufacturer of illegal substances like methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu. Ecstasy, an amphetamine type stimulant, and heroin.

He said the mistaken perception came about because of the confessions extracted from a number of drug traffickers who had been arrested abroad.

Corrections

IN THE June 30 issue, an Entertainment story on Page A20 ("Gaka Rodriguez: He discovers more cracks"—annotated the game of the scriptwriter of the movie "Nightdrug," who won the best story award in the 2004 Manila Film Festival. The winner's correct name is Jesse U Dimanonan—not Enno Jallorosa. We also record the award for best screenplay.

IN THE Aug. 2 issue, a front-page story—"Marikina, Pasig, Davao top business attractions"—erroneously described Chesil Lopez as a telecommunications company. ChinaLogic is engaged in call center services. Benito Sebastian Reyes, country manager of ChinaLogic Philippines, also said he has followed in the highly skilled footsteps of his father, Jose, and uncle Raul (former Ambassador to Mexico and Cuba), who, as a result of their successful international performance, contrary to a Department of Trade and Industry official's statement quoted in the story.

IN THE Aug. 8 issue, a Standard Biz story on Page B5—"Most in hotjet are thin; IBEE on patch to recover"—was accompanied by a photo with a misleading caption that read: "Mr. Thomas." The caption should have read: "Raymund Dizon with volunteer nurses Connie Capellanian."

IN THE Aug. 16 issue, the front-page banner story—"$20 billion for info on media murders"—erroneously reported that martyred Int. Inv. Gregorio "Gerry" Aquino Jr. served the National War in the 1960s. It was the Korean War in the 1950s that Aquino covered when he was then a reporter of The Manila Times.

THE Inquirer editorial on Aug. 14—"Bad language"—mentioned that the leaders of the Moroland Independence Front are "in Mindanao today." While the group talks to Davao Del Norte Rep. Benjamin Dy, the MILF leaders are in exile in the Netherlands, not Mindanao.

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors or omissions in Inquirer.net, the online Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI&L Plaza, Ortigas Ave., Pasig City, Philippines, Fax No. 896-6160, or e-mail them to the following addresses: inq@inquirer.com.ph for the Inquirer.net; corrections@inquirer.com.ph for the Philippine Daily Inquirer; and corrections@inquirer.com.ph for the Inquirer.net. Complaints about bad grammar or objectivity may be sent to Inquirer Ombudsman Sheila Coronel at the same address. Complaints against the conduct of the ads taker should be addressed to Inquirer Circulation Manager.

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The Daily Gospel

Wednesday, August 18, 2004
20th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Eek 34: 1-11
Gospel: Mt 20: 1-16

Jesus said to his disciples, "His story draws light on the kingdom of heaven, a landowner went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the workers a usual set of silver coin for the day and sent them to the vineyard.

"He went out again at about nine in the morning, and seeing others idle in the square, he said to them: 'You, too, go into vineyard and I will pay you what is just.' So they went.

"He went out again at noon and at about three in the afternoon and did the same. Finally he went out at the last working hour. It was the eleventh, and he saw others standing there. So he said to them: 'Why do you stay idle the whole day?' They answered: 'Because no one has hired us.' He then said to them: 'You, too, go into the vineyard.'

"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the workers and pay them their wage, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' Those who had come in work at the eleventh hour hired up and were given a denarius each. So on receiving it, they began to grumble against the landowner.

They said: 'These last hardly worked an hour, yet you have treated them the same as us who have endured the day's burden and the heat.' The owner said to one of them, 'Friend, I have not been unfair to you. Did you not agree on a denarius a day? So take what is yours and go. I want to give to this last the same as I give to you. Don't I have the right to do as I please with my money? Why are you envious when I am kind?'

"Thus will it be. The last will be first, the first will be last."

Commentary:

"A landowner went out early." Johann Nadal (1495) noticed it first on the word "early". God wakes us by the sun. God always works "early". As said, He sees the whole range of Revelation in this central "for he". He sees sins not done, God sees our early by the several birds, by which he came forth from the Father's bosom, to labour over having it. In another sense we hear Saint Jesus Christ went out early when he took human nature upon Himself, so that He might make us to go out and call us forth into His vineyard.

It's a great word "early". It expresses readiness, eagerness, determination. The way you get up in the morning shows how your day will be. If you can't get out of bed at the last minute, you are telling yourself, body and soul, that you're not ready for the day. You're not ready for God. You're not ready for others. You're not dropping your sheets. If someone phoned you at this, what a horrible mood it would be! It's wonderful to listen to music, somewhat it's not the greatest. The same are we with such confidence and timing, and then you do not have complaining. They are such hopeful things, you wouldn't imagine about dragging themselves along reluctantly. God loves cheerfulness.

When are we get the idea of "early" we tend to overdo it. Everyone wants to be the first to enter the room to another for who first place. But "early" doesn't have to mean "first" (it's in the middle of a pace, or at the end, early that's the right time, and I struggle myself at 8:00 a.m.! I am the first one!

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Ninoy's day a special non-working holiday

NINOY Aquino Day on Saturday will be a special non-working holiday around the country.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had declared Aug. 21 of every year a holiday to commemorate the anniversary of the 1983 assassination of the former senator and opposition leader.

The Senate and the House of Representatives enacted Republic Act No. 9256 in 2004 and 2004, respectively, making the day a regular holiday.

President Arroyo signed the measure into law on Feb. 25, 2004, during the 15th anniversary of People Power I which was ignited by Aquino's assassination on the tarmac of the then Manila International Airport as he was returning from exile in the United States. The airport has since been renamed the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The President also directed the Edsa Commission to come up with commemorative rites to observe this year's anniversary. **Juliet Labog-Javellana**

Educator: Blame RP problems on leaders

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY – Blame it on our leaders.

Arsimo de Manila University president Fr. Rosvenildo Mebrey, S.J., said the quality of the leaders who are running the country should be faulted for the country's failing economy.

Addressing 2,000 student leaders at Teachers Camp here on Tuesday, Mebrey said Philippine leaders in the last 30 years excelled in planning but could not implement the programs that had impressed most Asian countries since 1970.

"The Philippines' neighbors instead benefited from the country's own programs and overlooked opportunities.

Like most Asian countries, it is reeling through simultaneous crises involving catastrophic oil prices that compared to Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, the Philippines has failed to match their nations' slow but incremental rise since 1970, Mebrey said.

He cited startling differences between here Manila and Bangkok tackled their massive traffic problems.

Bangkok's traffic crisis was worse than Metro Manila's back in 1994. In only 10 years, however, Bangkok's traffic had eased due to the construction of massive skyways that link Thailand's capital city to the countryside, and the expansion of a light rail mass transport system which reduced vehicular traffic, he said.

Manila, meanwhile, endures its traffic jams with only a single network light rail transit system and a single skyway which Bangkok had adopted.

Mebrey said that Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore have been baffled by the fact that the Philippines had not implemented the same plans to the letter, while their own economies improved year after year.

"The big difference was our quality of leadership," Mebrey said. "Because the Philippines could not elect a Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, a Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia or the King and Queen of Thailand, who have been (that country's) stable leadership despite the changes in their governments."

He noted that many Filipino leaders "regard reservation to planning as a denial that to be named the dignity of a business leader."

"Our problems as Filipinos, nonstop ang leadership na tour (continuous) [The problem is the Philippines is that its leadership had gotten used to delegating], Some leaders are (scared of) getting their hands dirty," Mebrey said, adding: "That is precisely what they need to do. Get their hands dirty."

What has been worse for Philippine bureaucracy is that its leaders never bid in the planning process.

DOJ to seek Rod Strunk's return from US anew

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice will seek once again to have Rod Lauren Strunk, the principal suspect in the killing of his wife, actress Nida Blanca, extradited from the United States.

Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez said the DOJ is set to refile its extradition petition against Strunk as there weeks after it gathered new evidence and interviewed new witnesses in the case.

"There are significant developments and very soon, we will file the petition for extradition," Gutierrez said.

The DOJ's original petition for Strunk's extradition was dismissed in November last year by California Judge Gregory Hollows who cited "conflicting and inconsistent evidence" submitted by Philippine government lawyers.

Gutierrez said the new evidence would address the concerns raised by Hollows when he junked the first petition.

"We will be able to address all the concerns that were raised. That is the research task as time to refile the petition," Gutierrez said.

She declined to reveal the new evidence and the identities of the new witnesses, however, saying that DOJ would provide details once the new extradition petition was filed.

She also downplayed concerns that Strunk may have already made good his escape following Feldkarr' dismissal of the DOJ's first extradition petition.

"We know he is still in the United States," Gutierrez said.

She said the decision to refile the petition was reached after DOJ officials met last week with Harriet Demetriou, the lawyer of Rape Survivor, Shawn's daughter.

Strunk left the country on Jan. 21, 2002, to visit his ailing mother in California, promising to return to face investigation in the death of his wife.

He has been charged with Blanca's murder in the Pasig City Regional Trial Court but he refused to return to the Philippines, saying he would not get a fair trial if he returned.

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RP Navy rescues Malaysian fishers, then arrests them

JAMBANGA—The Philippine Navy rescued seven Malaysian fishermen after their vessel sank in rough seas, and then arrested them for poaching, a navy spokesman said Tuesday.

A navy anti-terrorist patrol near the maritime border between the Philippines and Malaysia saw four foreign trawlers fishing illegally on the Philippine side over the weekend, Capt. Felicisimo Angeles said.

Three of the trawlers were detained without incident along with their crews of 31 Indonesians and three Malaysians. But the fourth vessel began sinking in the rough seas.

The navy rescued the seven Malaysian crewmen and then placed them under arrest, Angeles told reporters.

The 31 fishermen were transferred to the town here where navy officials will face charges of illegal fishing. AFP

SPORTS

BANCO DE ORO Housing Loans

Figueroa goes down fighting

Bows to Spanish deadshot by 2 points; Molina 2nd in heats but fails to progress

By Armando T. Dagmoca Jr.
News Editor

ATHENS—The glass-falling run of archer Antonio Figueroa ended abruptly Tuesday as the arrows ran out on the Filipino's rally in the Round of 32 of the women's individual competition of the 28th Olympic Games here.

The new facet of the ordinary world, the 19-year-old Filipina went down fighting against world-ranked Almudena Gallardo of Spain at the storied Panathinaiko Stadium here.

The score was 150-150 with the Filipina falling short on her tally in the final end against the faltering Spaniard. The heartbreaking loss came two days after a stunning upset of former world champion and two-time Olympic medalist Nanda Valerio of Italy made the distinction Filipina the sensation of the archery competition here.

"Maayong malingkan (Bittersweet)," said Figueroa after the match.

But no matter had the released her final arrow of the Olympics that she started looking forward to the next Olympiad in Beijing, where she intends to do better with the lessons she learned from Athens.

"Now I know what it's like to be in the Olympics," Figueroa said in Filipino.

"In the next Olympics, I know what to do."

Elsewhere in the Games, Miguel Molina was eliminated in the 200-meter backstroke heats as the Filipino swimmer to wallow in disappointment in the swimming competitions at the Olympic Aquatic Center.

Molina finished second in the first heat but ranked 29th overall with a clocking of two minutes and 10.13 seconds. That surpassed his 2:09.93 clocking in the Southeast Asian Games in Samut Lart Dimrichai.

And Pyongkie Medes Dejit was to fight Uzbekistan's Khabibov Jhanjarow in the first round of the 51 kg division race at the Peristeri Olympic Boxing Hall late Tuesday night.

Figueroa came out of the tutorial under the 20 remaining old students with a reputation as a giant killer and the students announcer made sure the crowd in the marble-steps would remember that.

The Filipina responded with a perfect 10 on her first arrow, an opening shot that drew the cheers of a handful of Filipino spectators led by sports officials Cebu Duyet, president of the Philippine Olympic Committee, and Eric Buhain, chair of the Philippine Sports Commission.

But the 21-year-old Spaniard, who was already shooting arrows when Figueroa was still in pre-school, was not impressed. She consistently

Thorpe wins race of century A27

When first ladies were First Ladies

[illegible] dy with a quiet steadfastness, died when he died suddenly in 1957, she gracefully retired from the limelight, turning her back on a place for involvement in unspeakably astounding elections, declining suggestions to run for the presidency herself.

That was a time when first ladies were First Ladies.

Mrs. Magsaysay, widow of the beloved President Ramon Magsaysay, "Mrs of the Masses," passed away at 5 p.m. yesterday. She turned 89 on July 25.

Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. said his mother had been bedridden for several months. Two weeks ago, he said, she was operated on for complications of the stomach at St. Luke's Medical Center.

"We knew [the surgery] was a long shot," the senator told the Inquirer.

Mrs. Magsaysay left behind—aside from the senator, his sister Mila Mekinnedy (oldest daughter Teresita died in 1979) and six grandchildren...a whole generation of admirers who also remembered her as one of the loveliest, and possibly the shyest, of presidential wives.

In her first year in Malacañang, she promptly developed allergies, supposedly triggered by the dust in the drapes.

Widowed at 41 when her husband perished in a plane crash, she moved out of the Palace and stayed with friends until benefactors built a house for her and her young family in Wack Wack in Mandaluyong in 1956.

"My mother never moved to any other house," Senator Magsaysay said.

The exclusive ex-first lady came out in public only to campaign for her son in 1998.

Twenty years earlier, she recounted in the Sunday Inquirer Magazine in 1998, politicians and friends had asked her, "Why don't you run for President? Side by, seem, I didn't even want RM to run for reelection. I wanted my privacy."

She and RM loved campaigning with the people during campaign season, while she professed to look after their children. "I'm not well-versed in politics, the big things. Those were RM's. I'm only for the less important matters," she said.

In any case, she became active in many movements, especially with the Philippine National Red Cross.

Convent girl

She was a convent girl on vacation when she barely flattered Magsaysay, a lay enthusiast, save for his best bullet's garage in Zambales. "I thought he was too old for me," she told the UDA. "I thought he was interested in my older sister."

She ignored him.

"I was 17 and he was 25," Luz recalled. Ramon persisted. "Eventually I was just going to marry him, then I couldn't go back to school."

Luz was barely in her 20s when she gave birth in Taiwan as Mila would some two years later, and then Ramon Jr.

When war broke out, Ramon left his family to join the guerrilla forces in Western Luzon. He was later appointed military governor. In 1946, Ramon ran for a congressional seat in Zambales, upon the prodding of the guerrillas.

His wife was thorough. "My father was a politician, a municipal president, and I had heard stories about politicians and how their families broke up because of other women."

Even so, Ramon became congressman, and then President Elpidio Quirino handpicked him to become secretary of national defense. In 1953, he became president.

Life after Ramon was not easy, Luz said. He was never completely here. But she would invite any she was content with her memories.

After her son Ramon Jr. took his oath as a senator in 1995, Luz was asked what she see herself as First Mother?

Her reply: "I told Jun to serve his term well and then retire. One president in the family is enough."

Mrs. Magsaysay's remains lie in the National Shrine of the Divine Child, La Salle Greenhills, Mandaluyong City. She will be buried beside her husband. Interment is set on Saturday at the North Cemetery, Manila, after Mass at 9 a.m. With PNA dispatch

MRS. Magsaysay poses in front of a portrait of her late husband President Ramon Magsaysay

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Prosecutor dismisses ...

[illegible] her "failed to establish probable cause against the respondents."

Loopholes in investigation

The prosecutor, in her resolution, found several inadequacies in the police investigation.

The police had submitted the statements of two witnesses, both employees of Amanda Resources, to the prosecutor's office. But Delagarde said the investigators failed to follow up the leads given by the witnesses.

In their investigation, the police had considered that the Ilaw and Buklod attacked Florida Street at around 8 p.m., not in the middle of the night, as alleged by the complainants.

The police, however, maintained they could not determine exactly who had fired the shots, and which camp had fired first.

'Plan to be desired'

"The above conclusion of the PNP investigators regrettably does not appear to conform with the evidence on hand, particularly those coming from other informants, who were at the site when the shooting incidents happened," the prosecutor's resolution said.

"Neither (witness) pointed to anyone of the respondents as party to the shooting incidents," the resolution added.

The resolution said, in one point, referring to the investigation, "As it is, still much remains(s) to be desired."

Ryan Jaworski was the only one wounded in the shootout. He suffered gunshot wounds in both legs and was injured in the eye by a shard of glass.

Police have said that the Silesian Patrol belonged to the Jaworskis, while the Bonifacio CBE belonged to the Ilaw.

Sealed lips

Senior Supt. Ernesto Mallanao, Misamis Oriental police chief, declined yesterday to comment on the dismissal of the case.

"I have yet to read the resolution. I can't comment now," he said.

During the investigation in June, Mallanao told the Inquirer that both the Jaworskis and the Ilaw had not fully cooperated with the police, hampering their efforts to dig deeper into the case.

Police denied they were treating cases of theft and joint people differently. They said they could not do much in the Cagayan shoot-out because none of the parties involved involved had filed charges against each other.

The resolution said water pusher Nicolas Ocampo had testified seeing nine rebolos arrive in the area...a red truck (CBE) and Isuzu Crosswind with plate No. UEE-222, an owner-type jeep and a Nissan Patrol.

Conflicting versions

But Pearce did see witness the actual shooting because he was then returning to his post at the entrance of the restaurant, the resolution said.

The prosecutor alleged that according to Gerry Sacto (pushing a tricycle), the protagonists in the exchange of gunfire were the passengers of the red Isuzu Crosswind and the passengers of the silver-type jeepney.

This had, however, was not followed up by the investigators with Gerry Sacto," Delagarde said.

According to the police:

POLICE, who investigated the June 23 shoot-out between the sons of the Jaworski and Ilaw families in Cagayan de Oro, established the following:

- The two groups arrived at Florida Street in San Gonzalo, Cagayan de Oro.
- Their vehicles contained bullet holes. The Jaworskis' Nissan Patrol took the heaviest fire. It had nine bullet holes, two of which were "not holes." The Isuzu Crosswind had five bullet holes.
- All told, bullets could either enter somebody had fired from inside the vehicle, or somebody had fired from outside and the bullet went from through the vehicle.
- Ryan Jaworski was the only one wounded in the shootout. He suffered gunshot wounds in both legs and was injured in the eye by a shard of glass.
- Police found an empty shell of the police report, written by SPO2 Nilo Bajar and PO1 Jhoe Ramos.
- The report quoted a witness as saying that he first noticed a red Honda CBE arrive, followed by two other "backup" vehicles.
- Not long after, Arnold Gandia arrived in his Isuzu Crosswind with plate No. UEE-222 parked at the back of the CBE Building near the Aranda Restaurant, he threw to four occupants remained inside. Two more vehicles carrying presumed occupants of the occupants of the Bajar Gandia arrived.
- "These group met the other group in the middle of the street but no conversation was heard," the report said. Suddenly, some of the occupants "flung out to the ground."
- "The said words (seemed) to serve as command as occupants above were fired," the report said.
- The closed-out reportedly lasted 10 minutes and 82 spent shells were found. Luigi del Puerto

RP ad firms shine in New York

By Celine Maderazo
AVP for Strategic Marketing Communications

AFTER it so pleasingly demolished performances at the Cannes International Advertising Festival, the Philippines did even better at the recently concluded New York Festivals (NYF) international competition in design, print and outdoor advertising by winning gold, silver and bronze trophies.

Founded in 1957, the NYF oversees five other international awards competitions: film & video, television program-ming and promotions, radio programming and promotions, television and radio advertising, and interactive media. Entries reach all Oscar competitions are judged by the United States and around the world by panels of peers in their respective industries. To date, the NYF has representatives from 62 countries.

Entries from three local agencies, namely, TBWA Santiago, Manpaks and Point, DDB Philippines and Jimenez Basic, stood out. Their 44 other Philippine entries and more 20,000 entries from 38 countries.

TBWA Santiago, Manpaks and Point bagged the major awards in three categories: Adidas "Sandugo" won the country's first gold world in design; Energizer Eveready's "Eggs" won a silver world medal; "Uniwersal" nabbed Judges' Choice and the Adidas "Real Make sense" outdoor billboard won the only world medal in outdoor advertising.

The "Adidas" series, which won a Silver Pencil in Cannes as well as the Sun Ad-fest in Thailand and the Media Advertising Awards in Hong Kong, was created by TBWA's executive creative director Melvin Manpaks, creative director Joey Campillo and art director Ervin Sanz.

DDB Philippines won a bronze world medal for the second straight year for its "Sisump" print work for family and women's rights advocate Senator. It was created by executive creative director/copywriter Ruperto Pe, art director Manny de Paz and visualizer Noah Valdes.

"Sisump" was also the Creative Guild's Bronto Ad of the Month for August last year and won a bronze-winner in the Direct Ad of the Year competition in May.

Winning the country's fourth bronze world medal was Jimenez Basic's "Excelsior" for Asti Mackerrog created by executive creative director Don Sevilla III, copywriter Noel Jan-Asis and art director Randy Tiongco. The agency had earlier entered the film category.

The six of Cliv and Sigmund" television ad for Bench Inc. your bet to "Beauty queens.

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Bush reorganizes US forces abroad

Withdrawal to bring 70,000 troops home

WASHINGTON—Two US Army divisions will leave Cold War-era bases in Germany over the next decade, and the US military will increase its presence in former Warsaw Pact countries under President George W. Bush's reorganization of forces abroad.

Bush announced the plan on Monday and said the realignment ultimately would bring up to 70,000 troops, plus about 100,000 family members and civilian workers, back to the United States. Major shifts would not begin before 2006.

More than 300,000 US troops are now stationed overseas, most of them in Europe.

Pentagon officials said the realignment also would close scores of US installations in Europe to consolidate forces at larger bases there. At the same time, the United States would realize greater use of training and logistics bases on the soil of new allies like Uzbekistan, Poland and Romania, said the top Pentagon officials who briefed reporters on conditions of anonymity.

The moves are meant to provide greater flexibility and quicker reactions to deal with the smaller engagements that, like Iraq, pit relatively few troops against elusive enemies, officials said. And they will enjoy some troops closer to the Middle East and Central Asia.

On a visit to Washington last month, Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastase said he had offered Bush "a first-rate location for military bases." Romania, which joined Nato this year, has some ripe and naval bases on the Black Sea, such as one at Constanta. Romania, unlike striking elements of Iraq and Central Asia.

Democratic critics said Bush's plan would place more troops farther from potential battlefields and worse out soldiers with more frequent training overseas, away from families.

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark, a former Democratic presidential candidate, said Bush's plan "will significantly undermine US national security."

In Germany, the two heavy armored divisions will be replaced with one brigade, a unit roughly one-third the size of a division's 15,000 troops. Instead of tanks, the replacement unit will be outfitted with new Stryker vehicles, the smaller, lighter and faster armored vehicles that are part of the Army's future strategy.

The United States has had about 1,000 soldiers in Uzbekistan since the war in neighboring Afghanistan that followed the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. It has no soldiers permanently based in Poland and Romania, although it conducts training with those countries.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and other administration officials have frequently discussed the realignment with allies. Rumsfeld, who proposed the changes before the 2001 terrorist attacks, reassured Nato officials over the weekend in Sintra that the US moves are former Soviet and Warsaw Pact territory are not a threat to Moscow.

The changes would not directly affect the 150,000 troops involved in or supporting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both divisions based in Germany have seen action in Iraq, where the US military presence is increasingly to lies on National Guard and Reserve forces.

Underscoring the debates backdrop of military needs and diplomatic maneuvering, Bush administration officials offered few details of the realignment plans Monday—and did so only on condition of anonymity. They said any major shifts would not begin until at least 2006 and possibly later.

Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman said the three defense department officials and one state department official who briefed dozens of reporters at a Pentagon news conference had to remain anonymous. The officials involved are all closely involved in the planning and negotiating involved.

The officials said the United States planned no new major overseas bases. Poland has offered several bases for training, and US officials are talking with Turkish officials about using the Incirlik air base, which was home to allied planes patrolling the Iraqi "no-fly zone" over northern Iraq.

The US officials refused to discuss plans for troop shifts in Asia. US and South Korean officials previously said about one-third of the 37,000 American forces in South Korea would soon leave.

The United States and Japan are discussing possible changes for the more than 60,000 troops in Japan, but the officials would not say whether that involved increasing or decreasing the number. AP

USA President George W. Bush's bag bearing his image in Cincinnati, Ohio, on July 14. Bush later called for the gradual withdrawal of about 70,000 troops from Europe and Asia, but no immediate relief for troops in Iraq, in one of biggest post-Cold War realignments of US military forces abroad. REUTERS

Delays mar talks to end Najaf fighting

BAGHDAD—A delegation of Iraqi insurgents arrived in Najaf on Tuesday to help negotiate an end to the uprising in Najaf and found Sunday to oversee the exchange of the holy city when it could not get a military escort for the dangerous journey.

The 50 members from Iraq's National Conference had planned to leave early Tuesday morning to meet radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr and appeared to be following orders to put down their arms and join Iraq's political process. However, by early afternoon, they still remained at the conference site in central Baghdad.

"The US troops and Iraqi police refused to escort the delegation, they are afraid for its safety because three themselves are being targeted by militants," said delegate Ahmed al-Sayadi.

The interior ministry said it had received no request to provide security for the delegation.

"We are prepared to provide all kinds of support to the delegation from Baghdad to Najaf and back," interior ministry spokesperson Sabah Kadhim said.

As the delegation waited, a mortar round hit a busy street several kilometers away killing six people and injuring 35 others, officials said.

The blast on al-Rasheed Street set off building on fire and damaged seven cars, said Col. Adnan Abdul-Rahman, of the interior ministry.

It shredded the front of a bookshop, and blood stained with shards of glass on the street. Firefighters were hosing charred cars, three stretchers were seen.

The conference itself was considered a major target by militants waging a 16-month old insurgency in the country and an explosion, reportedly from a mortar, shook the area near the building Tuesday.

Sadr aide Ali al-Hamidy, who said he came to the conference to talk to UN officials about the Najaf violence, said he was slightly injured in the blast.

Sadr's followers have said they were boycotting the gathering, though several members of his movement have been seen there in recent days.

Explosions and gunfire shook the streets of Najaf on Monday as the clashes persisted. US troops entered the flashpoint Old City neighborhood, where Sadr's Mahdi Army militia was based, and US tanks encircled the Old City.

The militants have been battling US troops from Najaf's most venerable and revered Imam Ali Shrine since Aug. 5, when a two-month ceasefire broke down. AP

Moore turns up heat on Bush with DVD debut

LOS ANGELES—President George W. Bush will face a home-video barrage four weeks before the election: "Fahrenheit 9/11," Michael Moore's assault on Bush's handling of the Sept. 11 attacks, debuts on DVD and videotape Oct. 5.

The announcement on Monday confirmed Moore's initial intention to have the film out shortly before Election Day, a time frame the director favored since Miramax Films' Bob Weinstein talked Disney chief Michael Eisner into letting the company release "Fahrenheit 9/11" over the top Screen.

After the movie debuted to record box-office numbers for a documentary, distributor Lions Gate had indicated the movie might somehow playing theatrically through the end of the year, potentially delaying the home-video release.

The film has grossed $119 million domestically after three days, moving ever to top the $100 million mark.

Sony's Columbia TriStar home entertainment unit will release "Fahrenheit 9/11" on DVD and videotape.

Among DVD extras will be a documentary examining the release of "Fahrenheit 9/11," which had its theatrical distribution last spring after Disney refused to let subsidiary Miramax handle the film because of its political content. Miramax bosses Harvey and Bob Weinstein bought back the film and lined up distribution through Lions Gate and IFC Films.

Also featured on the DVD will be:

• Deleted footage that includes a scene outside Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, where seven US soldiers have been charged with abusing Iraqi prisoners.

• Coverage of Lila Lipscomb—the mother of a US soldier killed in Iraq, who was featured prominently in "Fahrenheit 9/11"—at the film's premiere in Washington.

• An examination of the acts and experiences of Arab-American comedians after the Sept. 11 attacks. AP

MOTOLITE
MAS PANGMATAGALAN

COURTNEY Love arrives at Beverly Hills Municipal Court for arraignment for a felony assault with a deadly weapon charge and after a pre-trial hearing in a separate felony drug possession charge on Aug. 16 in Beverly Hills, California.

Celebrity dramas play out in US courtrooms

NEW YORK—The fling of Pop, complete with golden arraignment, returned to court in the child molestation case against him as supporters cheered. Courtney Love received a date for her trial on drug charges. Prosecutors had a key appeal in the rape case against basketball star Kobe Bryant.

That wasn't all. A western carnival of stalking Catherine Zeta-Jones was ruled fit to stand trial. And Alexis Arquette, 34, the Pentagon's Basketball Association national Player of the Year, agreed to 36 hours of community service in West Virginia after being jailed for disqualifying.

It all happened Monday in America's celebrity-court circles: Simmering with star wattage even more than usual—cases against, and involving, the famous.

A burst of celebrity gone bad? Probably not. More likely, entertainment industry watchers and legal experts say, it's a media-age sign of the times—and not surprising for a land where millions are stirred to follow-called "Celebrity Justice."

"The hot like... a ball have drawn could be derived from this single subject not only tells you the state of things but the level of interest," said film critic Leonard Maltin.

Americans watching celebrities sue and fall can't stop. They follow tortured marriages that end in nasty divorces, high-paying careers that crash and burn, and the trudge of celebrities in and out of court for sundry infractions—from Glen Campbell (drunken driving) to Winona Ryder (shoplifting).

"There is a real delight in seeing celebrities fallen," said psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers. "There is a really warm, embarrassing side that you're thankful it's not you."

Part of it, she said, is simply the natural extension of celebrity-watching.

"They are all going through our same nightmares; the same things you can think of," she said Monday. "There's a part of us that says 'See, they have money and look at them.'"

Brothers says the days of the American glittered getting away with things—or having their most questionable doings swept under the rug by police and a complicit press—are gone. "Being a celebrity doesn't excuse you."

Decades ago, people were fascinated with a celebrity suit against Charlie Chaplin and the notorious trial of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, one of Hollywood's highest-paid actors, until he was charged in 1921 with killing actress Virginia Rappe. Though Arbuckle was unanimously acquitted, his acting career was ruined—but not before an appetite for the legal pursuit, loss of celebrities took root. AP

Madame President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo,

THANK YOU !

For protecting the Integrity of Republic Act No. 8794, more commonly know as the "ROAD USERS TAX", which since its enactment into law on June 2000, has earned government more than 4 billion pesos a year.

AND

For protecting all the truck drivers, their operators and clients, who have had to suffer with confusion and increasing desperation, the hassle of being subjected to harassment and forcible collections (clothed in different names, but with the same purpose) from the Local Government Units (LGUs) that by necessity our trucks have had to pass daily, from Luzon all the way down to Mindanao.

WE ARE ONE WITH YOU !

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WE SHALL ALWAYS STAND BY YOU !

For we support and applaud your project **"Kalsada Ko, Aalagaan Kof"** that has not only maintained our national roads, but provided much needed jobs to our countrymen, nationwide.

And finally because, we deplore the stubbornness of LGU officials like Governor Teresita Lazaro who up to now continues to defy the lawful order of OUR DULY ELECTED PRESIDENT.

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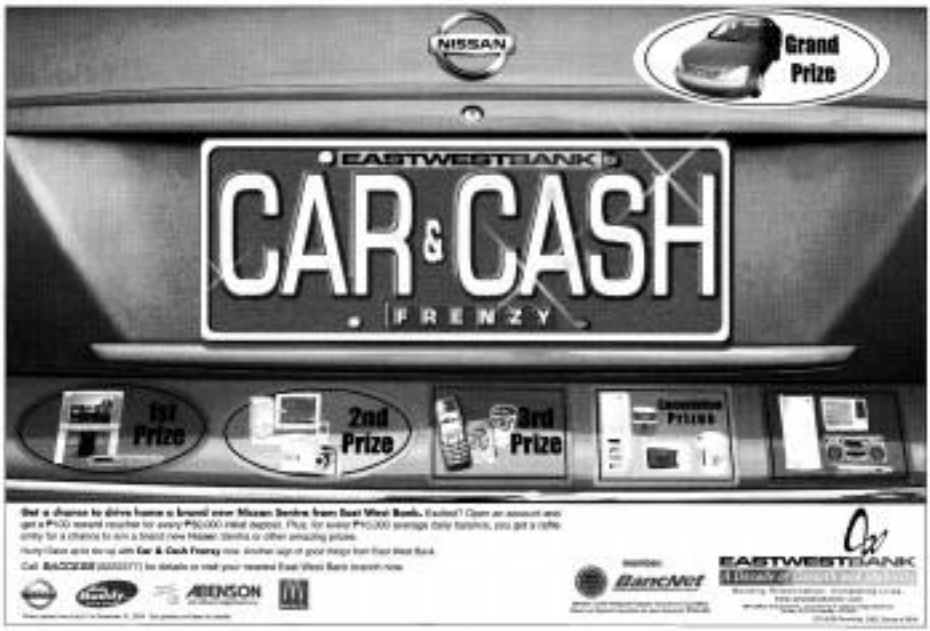

Chavez foes divided following recall defeat

CARACAS—Hamalad's opposition will have a rough time recovering after failing to oust President Hugo Chavez in a recall vote, a setback that quickly spurred infighting among the president's foes.

For opposition leaders, the defeat was an agonizing reminder of their past failures to oust Chavez.

Some analysts see ties between those who accuse Chavez of trying to impose a Cuban-style communist regime and those who say he has given the poor majority a voice in politics and greater access to health and education.

The opposition dismissed Monday exit polls showing victory for the governing cabinet, but they all flatly refused to acknowledge the president's triumph at the polls.

Chavez has alleged wide-spread fraud in Sunday's referendum even though former US President Jimmy Carter said the organization of elections was unprecedented.

Chavez won with 58 percent of the vote.

"The political leadership has not been in line with the people," said Antonio Ledezma, who urged opposition sympathizers to stage street protests.

Despite an economic recession, rising crime rates and 15 percent unemployment, Chavez won widespread support among Venezuela's poor majority by spending billions of dollars to build schools, roads, sending Cuban doctors to slums and offering loans to farmers and small businessmen.

Critics say the programs, many inspired by Cuban models, are a way of spreading communist propaganda in the poor.

The opposition, splintered as to small parties with contending ideologies—never came up with a clear plan for turning referendum or even a candidate to succeed Chavez.

Chavez, whose six-year term ends in January 2007, has now gained momentum ahead of September regional elections and 2006 congressional elections. His allies already control the National Assembly and most state governments. AP

TANGO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Japanese dancers Yuichi Kotaki (left) and Megumi Abe, winners of the "Tango Escenario 2004" contest pose in Tokyo, attendees at a gala figure on Aug. 16 in Buenos Aires, From Aug. 14-22, 223 couples, among them 58 from foreign countries, will participate in the 18 Tango Dance World Championship which will take place in the Argentine capital. AFP

Pro-democracy bet arrested in China

HONG KONG—A pro-democracy candidate for Hong Kong's legislature was arrested in mainland China for alleged fleeing sex with a prostitute and will be held for six months ahead of a key legislative election, a party official said Tuesday.

Another party colleague suggested that Ho Wai-ku's arrest on Friday was aimed at spoiling his chances in the Sept. 12 legislative elections, expected to throw a surge in support for pro-democracy lawmakers at the expense of the Beijing-government's local allies.

China considers pro-democracy lawmakers in Hong Kong (articles) to be troublemakers because of their harsh criticism of the Chinese government, and Beijing has warned many of them from the mainland. A former British colony Hong Kong returned to China rule in 1997.

Ho was arrested in a hotel room while on a business trip in the city of Dongguan in the mainland Chinese province of Guangdong, said fellow Democratic Party member Emily To, citing information provided by Ho's wife, who has met with her husband.

Ho maintains his innocence, To said, and allegedly has signed a confession after being beaten and slept kind of food and water.

Ho claims mainland police framed him by planting condoms in his bed and then bringing a prostitute to his room, To said. He has been ordered detained for six months of re-train education, To added. AP

Typhoon death toll in China reaches 164

SHANGHAI, China—Typhoon "Rananim's" death toll in eastern China rose to 164 on Tuesday with another 24 people missing, many in landslides sparked by the most powerful storm to hit the country in 40 years.

The missing included 16 people buried under tonnes of mud and rock in the mountainous outskirts of Yongjing city in Zhejiang province, where 29 people have already been confirmed dead, the government's Xinhua General Television reported.

With power and transport links cut, villagers have been digging through rocks and mud with their hands and bare feet.

Rananim pressed into central Zhejiang, about 150 km south of Shanghai on Thursday evening, causing an estimated 16.4 billion yuan (US$2 billion) in economic losses.

Of those killed, 109 died when houses collapsed, while 55 were lost in floods and landslides or carried away by the raging winds, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, quoting an unidentified local government spokesperson.

Xinhua said the typhoon affected 13 million people altogether, knocking 168,800 houses, destroying crops, roads and fishing boats, and killing 91,000 head of livestock. No figures were given for those left homeless.

Rananim also injured at least 1,000 people, 185 of them seriously and officials have expressed concern over the spread of diseases aided by daytime temperatures of 37 degrees Celsius. AP

Anwar's final appeal

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia's highest court will deliver a verdict next week on jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim's final appeal against a conviction and nine-year prison sentence for sodomy, officials said Tuesday.

But never the former deputy prime minister has said that he has lost faith in the judicial system and expects the Federal Court to reject his appeal on Aug. 26, his lawyer Sankara Nair said.

Anwar is serving prison terms totaling 15 years after being convicted at two separate trials of corruption and sodomy. He alleges the charges were fabricated—a stark and grim reward for quick and a leadership challenge he mounted against then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir fired Anwar as his deputy in 1998 after they had a public dispute during the Asian financial crisis. Mahathir retired last October after 22 years as prime minister. He denies conspiring to frame Anwar's downfall.

A Federal Court official confirmed the decision for the verdict on the appeal, which had been scheduled for last month but was later postponed. AP

Hurricane wreaks havoc on Florida heartland

PALMDALE, Florida—Hurricane "Charley" lifted Jay Clark's 3-ton cattle feeder and dumped it a half mile away. It flattened groundscrews belonging to brothers Wayne and Gabe Lambert. A packing house for strawberries and watermelon was reduced to a metal skeleton.

The hurricane's northeastern route tore through an agricultural swath of Florida—known as the Sunshine State—that you would likely see in glossy travel brochures. It's a world removed from the ritzy hotels of Miami Beach, the manicured golf communities along the Gulf Coast and the unsubdivided farmsales of Disney Heartland Orlando's other theme parks.

The center is located in Florida's heartland—the state's equivalent to the American Midwest. Instead of being the nation's breadbasket, it's the country's orange juice jug. More than a third of the orange juice produced in Florida comes from fruit in the counties through which Hurricane Charley passed.

"This is the heart of Florida agriculture. It bore the brunt of the storm," said Congressman Adam Putnam, whose district used to include the area hit by the storm.

The storm on Friday roughly followed the path of Highway 17 from Punta Gorda on the Gulf Coast, the hardest hit area, to Fort Meade, before veering through Polk County to Orlando and Daytona Beach.

The hurricane uprooted hundreds of orange trees along the highway turned a gas station into dust, tossed power lines and poles across the road, blew the roofs off countless homes and fruit packinghouses and left Wauchula's Main Street in a brushed-out state of crumbled brick buildings and smashed-in shops. AP

Taiwan inspectors find drinks tainted

TAIPEI—Ice tea, orange juice and other cold drinks at fast-food outlets in Taiwan's capital —including the Japanese chain MOS Burger and America's KFC—contained high levels of bacteria that could cause cramps and diarrhea, officials said Sunday.

The contamination was a sign that the drinks weren't properly refrigerated or were tainted by workers with poor hygiene, Taipei's government said in a report on its website.

The results were based on random inspections at 27 restaurants in July, the city said. The contaminated drinks contained coliform, a family of bacteria present in soil, water and stool.

Inspectors found the most contaminated drinks at MOS Burger, where a total six or 13 percent, of a total 46 samples of ice tea and ice coffee tested positive for the bacteria.

Thirty samples were taken at KFC and two of them—both in orange juice—tested positive, the city said.

LH Burger—then McDonald's was the cleaner, with all 143 samples passing the tests, the city said.

MOS Burger's Taiwan office said in a statement that it was surprised by the results and would send inspectors from Japan to help tighten quality control.

KFC's Taiwan office said it would strengthen worker training to resolve the problem.

The fast-food chains were asked to take those drinks off the counters. They were also fined up to NT$150,000 ($4,400), the city said. AP

Teacher pleads guilty to sex with teen stude

MELBOURNE—A 36-year-old gym teacher pleaded guilty to repeatedly having sex with a 15-year-old male student over a six-week period, a court heard Tuesday.

Raven Louise Ellis, a married mother of three, pleaded guilty to the Melbourne Magistrates' Court to six counts of having sex with a child under her care. Each conviction carries a possible sentence of 15 years in prison.

Magistrate Jan Huding released Ellis on bail until she appears for sentencing in the Victorian state County Court on Nov. 4.

The physical education teacher told police she had unprotected sex with the student, who cannot be identified, at her Melbourne home while her husband was away on business.

Ellis told she "didn't even stop and think about age" when she first had sex with the boy in October last year, according to her police statement tendered to court.

"It's not like it's where I've just taken advantage of this child," she told police. "This isn't just about sex, it's not a little boy."

A police review of Ellis' cell phone records showed the sent the boy 499 SMS messages between Oct. 25 and Jan. 7 that year.

Ellis told police the pair first had sex on Oct. 30 when he asked to go back to her house after school. Both said they had sex another five times between then Nov. 13 and 18, twice staying at her house overnight. AP

Cops in porn scandal

LONDON—Two British policemen have been suspended from duty after a newspaper reported they had been filmed enjoying the attentions of porn stars while they were supposed to be on patrol.

The News of the World reported Sunday that the two policemen, aged 30 and 34, had been called to calm down a crowd who ignored a pornographic movie being filmed in a street in London's Soho district.

But the officers talked their way into the film crew's van and allowed the two female stars to perform a sex act on them, while the crew secretly rolled the cameras, the paper said.

"I was not expecting them to want their photo taken with the girls or get an autograph," the paper quoted the film's director, Marine Pranchi, as saying.

"It was unbelievable. They just decided to have their very own private porn movie while on the job." Reuters

INQUIRER

OPINION

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First step

THE REPORT that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has been cooperating, and even assisting, the government in cracking down on the Pentagon kidnap gang is most welcome. While some people may dismiss such reports as mere propaganda then fact, it nevertheless points to the direction things should be going.

Kidnap gangs are not just the enemy of the state, they are the enemy of the people. They are the enemy of any ethnic or religious group whose reputation is tarnished by association with them. The MILF has long suffered from the prevalent belief that they are, if not actually aiding and abetting, then tolerating and coddling the Pentagon gang.

EDITORIAL

Going by the principles in leadership relations to expound, the MILF should have no room for association with groups like the Pentagon gang. The participation, explicit or not, of the MILF in operations against kidnap gangs like the Pentagon should allow both Muslims and Christians, Mindanao folk, and people in the Visayas and Luzon, to look at the MILF in a more positive light.

The cooperation between the MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines that culminated in the beachhead seizure of the alleged Pentagon camp in Ligawasan March is just one step. It is the first to many confidence-building measures that should take place for the MILF's idealistic credentials to be established and made credible. The MILF has against it a whole range of extremely instransigents—beginning with the ASF—and terrors that will terminate to view any MILF cooperation as innocent and mere opportunism.

That brings us the first-the real challenge that lies ahead for the MILF as it attempts to strengthen and secure its position as a group representing the interests of Muslim Filipinos.

If doubts persist about the success of the joint operation that was supposed to have claimed the life of Pentagon leader Abu Sabaya, more so does the suspicion linger that the MILF continues to harbor and help international terrorists belonging to Jemaah Islamiyah.

It is a common belief among members of the AFP and the media, that the MILF, like the NPA, sees nothing wrong with resorting to pure banditry in order to fund its political operations. In fact, the suspicion that the MILF is actually behind groups like the Pentagon gang is worse than criticisms leveled at the leftist groups that resort "revolutionary taxes," because at least the leftists dignify their plunder with political terminology. In contrast, in the eyes of many, the MILF simply disclaims knowledge for what its surrogates are actually doing.

To disabuse those who have to this kind of thinking, which the MILF is the first to denounce as unfair, it must go further than cooperating with the government in hunting down bandit groups. It must condemn the issue of terrorism in the name of Islam, specifically, by its alleged links with Jemaah Islamiyah. While its leadership has denied such links, reports have come out every now and then from both local and foreign sources saying that the MILF has provided sanctuaries and training sites for the Southeast Asian terrorist organizations.

The MILF must now speed up its efforts to rebuild its image by working to dismantle if not eliminate the presence of JI in our country. It must be seen to be working toward the elimination of the existing presence of JI and to keeping the country free of agents provocateurs and terrorists who intend to use the country as both their base and refuge. This can be done in many ways, including the sharing of intelligence, the quiet but firm withdrawal of logistical and moral support, and, hopefully, the active elimination of terrorist cells and operatives.

To fail to do so would be to restrict the emerging relationships between the government and the MILF strictly to that of combatants resembling for a truce. It would not prove the prospects for peace or a just settlement of the grievances of Muslim Filipinos. It would mean that the MILF is only after cosmetic public relations benefits, which does not, by any stretch of the imagination, leave any room for confidence building. It would mean that in reality the MILF is for-ground behind our last kidnapping for ransom but also the most ruthless and reprehensible kinds of terrorism.

High taxes may reduce, not increase, revenue

THE PHILIPPINE press is in an uproar over the issue of assassinations of journalists. It is not because they are afraid of serving it but because of the helplessness of police agencies in bringing the assassins to justice. Journalists have long accepted that premature death is an occupational hazard. Today, it is more or less there from law officers, politicians and bomb-disposal experts. The crime rates remain far there than death by hot lots to death by reasons of poverty.

It has been that way since the Philippines first began publishing newspapers. To cite one example, Hiram del Pilar (pen name: Plaridel), hero, thinker, editor of La Solidaridad and among the earliest Filipino journalists, died at an early age a very poor man. Like the early writers, painters and composers, many journalists have died of hunger.

Aside from malnutrition, heart disease and high blood pressure and then liver early in journalism is a high stress job. The journalist lives under constant pressure in the form with the deadline and worries constantly that he may have missed an important story or that a competitor may have scooped him.

Outbreaks of the liver, emphysema and lung cancer are other life-shortening for journalists because many of them are heavy drinkers and smokers. The reason is that nicotine drives their addiction and the alcohol they drink. That is why drinks in newspapers are full of cigarette burns. Alcohol, on the other hand, is taken them after deadline.

They are also heavy coffee drinkers, because caffeine is also a stimulant, but at least coffee, contrary to popular belief, is not harmful to health.

Which is the reason why Plaridel, the assassination of journalists, will mark the death (or birth) anniversary of Del Pilar, or Plaridel, on Sep. 20 with evening cocktails at (where else?) the Plaridels restaurant in Intramuros. Manila Mayor Lito Atienza will be the special guest, since he has jurisdiction now M.H. del Pilar Street in the tourist belt. Journalists and friends are invited. Tickets are only P1,500 per person, a bargain in to-

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As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

day's inflationary economy.

Speaking of poverty and hunger, isn't it ironic that the government is planning to impose more taxes at this time when poverty is so like a plague overrunning our country? Isn't it downright stupid, uncaring and callous that the oil tax will be increased at a time when the price of crude oil is rising?

The government's rationalization that the new oil tax is "not exactly anti-poor" is insulting. It assumes that the people are stupid.

A higher oil tax will raise the prices of fuel, which will trigger a chain reaction that will raise taxes transportation and power rates and, therefore, practically everything else. Even the Supreme Court has noticed court fees although those are not inflicted at all by all prices. Unfortunately, while the poor don't have to pay the higher court fees, they will have to buy food whose prices are already rising.

Raising taxes at this time is downright stupid. The government sees only that it needs more money and therefore will get it from the people. But it does not see that in the long run, it would be counterproductive and would actually reduce tax revenue instead of increase it.

The government is already taking almost 21 percent of an average family's income in the form of direct and indirect taxes. If you take more by increasing taxes, people would have little money left to buy goods and services that business and businesses manufacture and sell. Therefore, they would be able to sell less of them and would have less income. And lower income, they would pay less income taxes.

Some of them may even have to lay off employees. Those jobless employees would be unable to buy goods and therefore businesses would be able to sell even less and have small- or no-income and pay less taxes. It would be an other chain reaction.

Furthermore, the employees who have their jobs would not have any income and therefore would not pay any income tax.

The so-called "sin products"—cigarettes and liquor—are the favorite whipping boy of politicians. When they need more taxes, the answer pick sometimes is to raise excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol. The high prices will discourage people from smoking and drinking, which are bad for their health, government says.

But if they do that, the cigarette and liquor companies would be able to sell less and therefore would pay less taxes. The government, therefore, would collect less taxes instead of more.

Worse, the high prices of the tax-paying domestic products would encourage smuggling. Because the smuggled products would be cheaper, since they are not paying taxes, people would buy them instead of the local counterparts.

The government would be hit by a double whammy: it would collect less taxes from the domestic products and it would not be able to collect any tax from the smuggled cigarettes and liquor that the people are buying.

The usual remedy of other governments when their economies are depressed is to reduce excise or base tax holidays. That is intended to leave the people more spending money. With more money in their hands, the people would buy more goods, the factories would produce more, sell more and pay more taxes.

Also they would hire more workers. And the more people are employed, the more income taxes they pay. With more income, they buy more and businesses expands and pay more income taxes. Another chain reaction. The economy prospers.

That's what we should do.

Lopsided

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiroz

Southern capitals and those in the Southern hinterlands is murdered by the discriminative reporting by the national media of the events in the national capital and those in the provinces and hinterlands. The inequity is to be found right where we stand.

There is no lack of examples to show the differential attitude of the national media toward events in Metro Manila and those in the provinces. The very distribution of the pages of newspapers and the airtime of TV news shows us. Most newspapers have correspondents and even bureaus in Davao, Visayas and Mindanao. But the stories from these correspondents and bureaus are limited to a few inches or couple of broadcasts, most of them, as Pilger puts it, in a touch-and-filters.

The same is true of TV. Primetime TV news still regularly consists of what GMA did, what Erap and his cronies and congressmen debated and what scandals they figured in, what happened in Metro Manila (normally crime reports) and miscellaneous stories from the provinces before some business about the feud between Vicky Belo and Shaneen Baron and the swallows.

A fashion show for charity in Makati or a foreign band playing at the Hilton Hotel Theater is treated to get more coverage and have a longer shelf life than a drought in Davao or famine in a village in Mountain Province. Indeed, a report about magnanimous having dalliances with married women is considered more interesting coverage than its murder—and Congress—than protracted journalistic hearings involving one or couples, with death. What we call the national media are essentially the Metro Manila media.

I said it before and I say it again: That is the broader perspective from which to view the new national position (it has replaced Beijing-Qing Chinese businessmen) which is murdering journalists. That perspective is that the national media are (write) only or mainly in the affairs of Metro Manila.

Of course, the members of the provincial journalists like "provincial" (here is by no means a casual modifier, it is the heart of the matter: all the murdered journalists are provincial journalists) have been reported by the national media. But to get an idea about the relative lightness which they have been dealt, imagine someone from MS-CBS or GMA7, or from the bosses at the Star, meeting with members while doing his or her jobs one day. Someone forbid that should happen, but if that unthinkable thing should happen, how do you suppose the national media would react? Neither Malacañang nor the Senate or House nor the police nor any institutions of this society will have a day of peace from the deafening and incessant demand from media for the perpetrators of the deed to be caught and punished.

You don't know that with the deaths of the provincial journalists.

The murder of journalists won't stop simply by increasing the bounty for the capture of the murderers. It may help by limiting ground, but it won't do much else. Not if everything is forgotten with token justice done, and everyone goes his merry way afterward. Certainly, it won't stop with sitting endangered journalists. The problem there, as noted before, is not just that it is so offensive (you can't stop a determined assassin, short of not appearing in public), it is that it turns the journalists into a threat to other citizens (journalists can be abusive, too, especially those with guns). The only way to stop the murders is to create the kind of climate in your land in the national capital, where the price of the crime becomes far too many to carry out.

That means the national media taking those murders very, very personally. Nothing else will do the trick.

Lee dynasty grips Singapore

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

SINGAPORE, Southeast Asia's most dynastic political family, had a reunion of sorts on Thursday last week, when its future Lions took the oath as the country's richest prime minister in 39 years. His father rose from Lee Chuk Yong, who formally announced that he was stepping down on Singapore's National Day last Aug. 9 to make way for a new dynastic rule, since the new prime minister is the son of the first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who is widely regarded as the founder of modern Singapore. He took office 14 years after his father relinquished power.

Lee Hsien Loong, 52, like his father, was educated in Cambridge University and had been groomed for the succession by his father, serving in the setup as a finance minister in the Goh Chok Tong cabinet. He was also a protégé of the elder Lee. The well-paved succession arrangement raises questions in Southeast Asia, where dynastic rule is common, whether separation is compatible with democracy. Lee Kuan Yew has described democracy as a "messy business" and a medical necessity.

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The younger Lee had held the rank of brigadier in the Singapore military. The ranks of Lee, Goh and Lee Kuan Yew's son-in-law are commonly referred to as "The Three—father, son and the third Goh." The question that hovers in the horizon is whether Lee's economic breakdown consist of incident's announcements or a reversal of the meteoric rise of Singapore under the administration of Goh who, as a sign of his popularity, was given a standing ovation by 10,000 cheering Singaporeans chorus during their National Day parade.

Southeast Asia is known for long-serving leaders, including veteran Suharto of Indonesia, Mahathir of Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia and President Ferdinand Marcos. Stepsons and dynastic building are not uncommon in the region. President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia is the daughter of President Sukarno, and is seeking reelection. Prime Minister Hun Sen is the son-in-law of Premier Norodom Sihanouk.

Singapore's dynastic succession is unique in that it is the only country in the region that has had a father-son succession. Lee Kuan Yew's son-in-law, Lee Hsien Yang, is also being

After 'sin' taxes, prepare for 'popularity' taxes

WITH inflation rising to 6.6 percent because of high oil prices, the proposal of the government to increase taxes to solve our budget deficit is a source of frustration over the heads of the poverty-stricken Filipino people. Among the proposed taxes that would increase the sufferings of the people are the additional excise tax on oil products and the tax on text messaging.

With the international prices of crude oil at their highest level, the proposed additional tax on oil products would make transportation cost prohibitive. On the other hand, the additional taxes on communication companies, imposed mainly on text messages, would make this popular form of communication more expensive. Oil and text messaging are both essential to the day-to-day activities of Filipinos. Instead of imposing additional taxes, the government should plug tax loopholes by arresting tax cheats all over the government are evidence. Studies show that billions of pesos in revenues are lost annually because of tax evasion, especially by the rich. Also, in the field of tax administration, there is widespread corruption in the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

The government should stop trying to impose an additional tax on vice because it is popular. "Sin" taxes, instead, has become one more popular vehicle of communication among low-income groups because it is cheap and fun. Taxing a service simply because it is popular is cruel and unjust. I appeal to the government to drop this unrealistic and unkind proposal.

—KEN ROBLES,
33 Bagong Silang,
Natalanga City

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Choices and the population issue

THE COMMENTARIES on the saga of Angelo de la Cruz overlooked an important point. The overnight stay by ministries of the build of the Roman Catholic Church on the turn of one people.

With no jobs available in the Philippines, limited skills and eight months to host (not to mention other obligations to the extended family in the village) what else could De la Cruz do? And it is not—at President Macapagal-Arroyo would like us to believe—that the Filipino will evade for work anywhere abroad because he is set afloat; he does so because he has no choice.

Typical of countless Filipinos, De la Cruz was left with no other choice but to find work in a foreign land as a means of survival. Never mind if it paid poorly (relative to foreign pay standards for equivalent work), was hazardous and even degrading. His family deserves a decent life.

This is not to begrudge De la Cruz for having eight children. This is only to point out that his options might have been different had he a smaller family. Finding a job abroad, despite its heavy social and psychological costs, would not have been as pressing.

On the other hand, GMA's inferior packages will not be able to deliver decent to 14 million jobs that would bring to bear a substantial number of overseas Filipino workers and reunite them with their families; much less will the to-from be able to accommodate the flood of new graduates entering the labor market in the next six years—not without a genuine population management. Something has to be done to keep our population at a more reasonable level.

If GMA was able to stand up to the United States by pulling out the small Filipino contingent in Iraq, she can't even stand up to the Church on the population issue? Let us stop this pretense that we can solve our other problems without addressing the issue of population.

—ALBERTO C. LEVILLA III,
foreign experts assistant professor,
Institute for Population and Social
Research, Mahidol University, Salaya
Campus, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Make laws from people's viewpoint, lawmakers challenged

THE MEMBERS of both chambers of Congress would do well to remember that they owe their legislative seat to President Macapagal-Arroyo but to the Filipino people and their respective constituencies, who are mostly workers and ordinary citizens.

The administration's proposal to increase taxes on nearly all items is unfair to ordinary Filipinos, especially the workers and the poor. Additional tax burdens can never be good especially when imposed on those who have not enjoyed wage and benefit increases in the last six years.

It is a shame that Ms. Arroyo has mentioned nothing about increasing the number of government employees, or putting an end to the oil price hikes and the electricity rate increases in her State of the Nation Address (Sona) last July 26. Instead, she called on the Filipino people to carry a heavier cross.

Before the administration would start creating the 10 million jobs it promised within the next six years, it rejected the exit door for thousands of government employees. And it is now killing the livelihood of thousands of others and undermining the economic security of millions more by calling for higher fees and taxes, while moving back on social benefits and services. The administration also plans to offer 75 percent of the proposed 2005 billion 2006 national budget to foreign debt servicing.

Our legislators should look beyond their noses or Malacañang. They should not blindly cooperate in proposed legislative agenda. They should face forces to the demands of their constituencies, and they will hear that the overwhelming protest is not for more and higher taxes, not for higher electricity rates, but for more employment, living wages, lower prices and an end to regressive taxation and foreign debt servicing. They should outright oppose all moves to arbitrarily normalize the bureaucracy by unjust laying off of thousands of government employees.

Now more than ever, lawmakers must break away from the traditional mindset that has kept our people in the prison of underdevelopment and espouse more radical thinking. They should look at and analyze the current economic and political situation from the standpoint of the poor and workers, and they will see that the administration's proposals offer nothing but more misery and poverty for our people.

The government has another duty coming it believes that the Filipino people will dutifully accept new taxes and allow cutbacks in the budgetary allocations for vital social services such as health, housing and education. The President's credibility as an elected official is at an all-time low, and there are still millions of Filipinos who refuse to recognize her tenuous mandate as her leadership. New taxes will be added fuel to the bonfire of public resentment and resistance against her government.

Malacañang and its allies in Congress will not be able to push their anti-people legislative agenda without facing the strongest possible opposition from the progressives and militants in the house of representatives, and more importantly, from the people's movement.

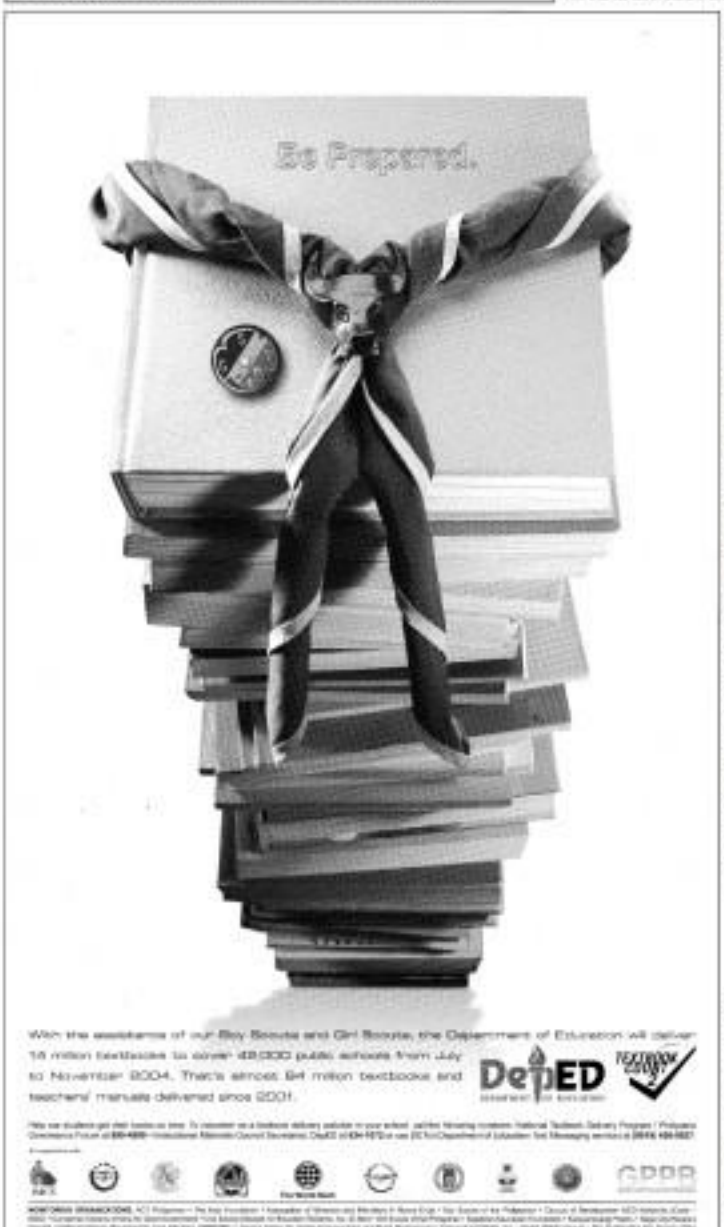
—CRISPIN B. BELTRAN,
party-list representative,
Anakpawis National Political Party,
House of Representatives,
South Wing Rm. 602 Commonwealth,
Quezon City
congressmanbeltran@i-manila.com.ph

Is GSIS dying?

THERE have been reports that Winston Garcia, general manager of the Government Service Insurance System, has warned that the "lifespan" of GSIS is only five or eight years. "This is incorrect. Something should be done. If GSIS cannot be saved anymore because of mismanagement, at least our contributions must be returned to us. It's a pity that this government lending institution is in the verge of bankruptcy. Those responsible for bringing GSIS to this situation—either because of graft and corruption or sheer incompetence or negligence—if found guilty should be prosecuted and punished.

Right now, thousands of GSIS members are campaigning over what they call "retirement" of GSIS funds. They are complaining why GSIS cannot pay the retirement benefits of incumbent members from applications of its members.

—ARNOLD MARK S. ALAMO,
Imperial Subdivision, Bunsuran,
Santiago City



Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Gerapinta

SYNDICATE MEMBERS

2 cops in rob gang slain in gunfight

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Three suspected members of a robbery syndicate, two of them policemen, were killed in separate clashes with the police here and in Solano town on Monday night.

Chief Insp. Teodoro Inumo, provincial police intelligence chief, identified the slain suspects as PO1 Reynaldo Vinluan and PO1 Ruben Balaga, who were assigned to the Cauayan police regional office and Ifugao provincial mobile group in Lagawe town, respectively. The third suspect has yet to be identified.

Inumo said Aclanio policemen were responding to a report of an ongoing robbery at the Sudsar farm in Barangay Inusa during a heavy rain at 9:15 p.m. Monday when they caught up with two of the suspects aboard a motorcycle.

The suspects, armed with an M-16 Armalite rifle, fired at the policemen who were in front of the Catholic church in downtown Solano.

Inumo said the prompted the policemen to shoot back.

First casualty

The ensuing gunfight resulted in the immediate death of the driver, Balaga, while Vinluan died about six commandos rushed to the hospital.

Reinforcements from the Bayombong police, led by Senior Insp. Ismael Dacayanan, captured the suspects' escape route in Barangay Luyan here, where they clashed with Pinlalan and another companion.

Recovered from the suspects were P60,000 in cash, an M-16 Armalite rifle, a .45-cal. pistol, a .38-cal. revolver, bullets, a cellular phone and a small motor mounted in a wooden bag, reportedly Pinlalan's amulet.

Police also recovered two blood-stained bulletproof vests worn by the two policemen during the bush.

Inumo said the group would be summons of the Joint Ifugao robbery group that was reported to be behind the series of robberies in Solano and Villaverde towns, as well as in Isabela and Quirino.

"We are still hunting more of their members who also participated in the robbery," Inumo said.

Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

4 hurt in grenade attack in Batangas

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Four people, including a Mamburao policeman and his two sons, were seriously injured after an unidentified suspect threw a hand grenade in front of their house inside a subdivision in Sto. Tomas, Batangas just before dusk on Monday.

Chief Insp. Saul Suaco, town police chief, said victim PO2 Agustin Mateo, 34, assigned at the Special Weapons and Tactics Team of the Mamburao police, was talking with neighbor Cesilito Mendoza, 47, in front of his house at around 6:50 p.m. in Blue Isle Subdivision in Barangay Sta. Maria when the suspect on board a gray scooter of unknown and lobbed a fist-sized grenade at them.

Mateo's two sons, aged 1 and 2, who were playing near the area, were also injured in the attack.

They were rushed to the Mercado Hospital in Tanauan City for treatment.

The policeman's Kawasaki motorcycle was also damaged in the explosion, police said.

The motive for the attack is still undetermined. Tanauan cold police are still talking with Mateo's relatives and co-workers in Bislig and if he had enemies.

"Luckily there were witnesses who saw the suspect buying something from the women's store before the incident happened. Maybe they could give us important details to identify the suspect," Tanauan said. Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Traders behind marijuana

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Wealthy businessmen are alleged to be behind the proliferation of marijuana plantations in Zamboanga Sur, according to planters who recently surrendered to authorities. Supt. Wilfredo Villanueva, director of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in Southern Mindanao, said the 179 planters who surrendered last month were given the names of the suspected financiers of marijuana plantations. He said the PDEA was digging deeper into the allegations. Recipients of the surrender of the planters' firearms, authorities localized and uprooted marijuana plants are Bunawan PI militia.

Anthony Alindu, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Grenade lobbed

DAVAO CITY—Unidentified man lobbed a hand grenade at the house of Davao del Sur Gov. Benjamin Joseph Bautista in Digos City yesterday morning. Red Toad, Benito Quiñanes, Davao del Sur police chief, said no one was hurt in the attack, which damaged some appliances of Bautista's room. Quiñanes said the governor was in Manila when the attack happened at around 1:30 a.m. Seven guards, two barracks and Jun Adadilla and five staff members were inside the house when the explosion took place. The grenade said he was taking coffee at the kitchen when they heard an explosion. He said he thought that the blast just came from an exploded liquefied petroleum gas. He said he checked it out. The guards reported about the attack only at 6 a.m. when they found shrapnels near the window.

Anthony Alindu, PDI Mindanao Bureau

NPA leader nabbed

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Police arrested an alleged top official of the New People's Army (NPA) operating in Zamboanga Mindoro Islands as assistant in Cotabato. Senior Officer Third Class Nilmar Ajos identified Catholic "Ka Mike" Gutlay, 21, of Barangay Ilomavis, Calamansi. The alleged Mindoro was reportedly a ranking kidnapping, robbery and murder case in Mindoro. Gutlay, who is listed as the second most wanted person in the province, was arrested based on seven warrants of arrest issued by Judge Ramon Reyes of the Cotabato regional trial court, police said. But commander spokesman Gregorio Pascual said Gutlay was no longer connected with the rebel movement since 2001.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

NPA attacks Army station

ZAMBOANGA CITY—About 70 armed rebels suspected to be New People's Army rebels fired at an Army detachment in Barangay Cabacling, Lupi, Camarines Sur at Friday night. Military reports said the 10-minute gunfight that resulted in the wounding of Army PFC Reynaldo Zabala. The rebels fled toward the hills southeast of the village. Army Lt. Col. Rodolfo Fernandez, spokesperson of the Bicol's 9th Infantry Division based in Camarines Sur, said that in October, the Army would continue supporting government programs in remote barangays.

Alexis Lorigo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Luzon, magbantay para sa tamang bilang!

TEXTBOOK COUNT 2

Schedule and allocation of textbooks per region

Region/Division	No. of Municipal Elem.	No. of School Beginning	No. of High Schools	GRAND TOTAL TEXTBOOKS	Delivery Schedule
GRAND TOTAL - CAR	1,466	813	1,431	2,448,795	
1 TOTAL	1,455	709	813	579,661	
Ilocos (Reg)				4,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Ilocos Sur	213	118	117	92,207	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Pangasinan I	222	124	122	92,207	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Pangasinan II	167	92	90	69,141	Jul 28 - Aug 27
La Union	214	119	117	92,207	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Baguio City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
Benguet	83	54	53	46,256	Aug 2 - 31
Ifugao	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
Mountain Prov.	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
Abra	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
Kalinga	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
Apayao	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
2 TOTAL	1,814	715	281	416,381	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Batanes	18	1	1	5,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Cagayan	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Isabela	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - 31
Quirino	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
Nueva Vizcaya	73	1	1	5,341	Aug 2 - 31
Tuguegarao City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
3 TOTAL	1,814	715	281	416,381	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Aurora	73	1	1	5,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Bataan	73	1	1	5,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Bulacan	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Nueva Ecija	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Pampanga	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Tarlac	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Zambales	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Angeles City	10	1	1	8,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Olongapo City	10	1	1	8,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Subic (SBMA)	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
San Jose del Monte City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
Cabanatuan City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
Gapan City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
San Fernando City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - 31
4A TOTAL	1,514	86	311	548,341	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Batangas	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Cavite	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Laguna	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Quezon	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Rizal	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Lucena City	10	1	1	8,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Tayabas City	10	1	1	8,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
4B TOTAL	1,514	86	311	548,341	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Marinduque	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Occidental Mindoro	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Oriental Mindoro	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Palawan	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Romblon	301	151	151	115,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Puerto Princesa City	10	1	1	8,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
Calapan City	10	1	1	8,341	Jul 28 - Aug 27
5 TOTAL	2,815	1,406	1,406	1,126,815	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Albay	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Camarines Norte	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Camarines Sur	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Catanduanes	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Masbate	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Sorsogon	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Legazpi City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Naga City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Iriga City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Tabaco City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Virac (Catanduanes)	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
6 TOTAL	2,815	1,406	1,406	1,126,815	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Aklan	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Antique	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Capiz	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Iloilo	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Guimaras	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Bacolod City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Iloilo City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Roxas City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
7 TOTAL	2,815	1,406	1,406	1,126,815	
Region (Reg)				7,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Bohol	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Cebu	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Negros Oriental	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Siquijor	301	151	151	115,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Cebu City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Dumaguete City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1
Tagbilaran City	10	1	1	8,341	Aug 2 - Sept 1

To volunteer as a textbook delivery watcher in your school, call the following numbers: National Textbook Delivery Program - Philippine Governance Forum at 890-4580 - Instructional Materials Council Secretariat, DepED at 634-1072; or use DBT in (Department of Education Text Messaging service) at 2919; 450-5027

DepED

The World Bank

GPPB

MONITORING ORGANIZATIONS: ACT Philippines • The Asia Foundation • Association of Watchers and Watchers in Rural Areas • Big Society of the Philippines • Caucus of Development NGO Networks (Code – NGO) • Concerned Citizens of Aklan for Good Government • Civil Society Network for Education Reforms, Inc. (E-Net) • Gil Scouts of the Philippines • Kapatiran Kaunlaran Foundation • Homeowners ng Pilipino • Naga City People's Council • National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) • Negros Center for People Empowerment and Rural Development • Procurement Watch, Inc. • Social Watch Visayas • Tan Collaborating Boy Scouts of the Philippines Association • Transparency and Accountability Network • Women of Tabaldan Education (WE) • Campaign Advocacy & PR, Inc. (CAPRI) NATIONAL COORDINATOR: Government Watch – Ateneo School of Government

Killing of 19-yr-old woman shocks Olongapo execs

DAXAO PEETA

Performers come out in full color in the streets of Bacolod City as it celebrates its annual Masskara or Dakara festival, a thanksgiving feast for beautiful surroundings.

OLONGAPO CITY—The death of a 19-year-old student, who died at 17 and recently after she was allegedly raped, has shocked the police and the city government as a heinous act in the Hoodlum crime here in recent years.

The victim, Mary Ann Briones, was found half-naked and slumped on the floor inside the bathroom of her friend's house in Barangay West Tapinac here on Tuesday morning.

Senior Supt. Orlando Mendaros Jr., Olongapo police director, said the victim was stabbed and killed by a suspected drug addict using a 30-inch kitchen knife.

Witnesses identified the suspect as Alfredo Castillo, who escaped.

"It is very alarming. The city has never seen such a gory crime in the past few years," Mendaros said.

Mayor James Gordon Jr. denounced the killing, which he described as one of the most brutal in the city. He ordered the police to hunt Castillo, a resident of Barangay Happy Valley in Subic, Zambales.

In sworn affidavits, witnesses said Briones and Castillo met during a drinking spree with their friends in West Tapinac here.

Hours later, the two were inside the house of the friend and were found sulking.

Eugene Castillo, a nephew of the suspect and one of the witnesses, said he saw Briones and Castillo holding an aluminum foil and a lighter, which he suspected the two used in pulling shabu, at around 6 a.m. Saturday.

Briones' friend, Eduardo Bautista, told investigators that he went to the house to look for Briones. "I went inside the house and knocked on the bathroom's door at it called Mary Ann. She told me that she would get out soon," Bautista said in his affidavit.

But at past 9 a.m. that day she was found by Briones shouting inside the bathroom and asking for help. Her friends heard her shouting. "Ayaw ko na (I don't like a separation)."

A few minutes later, witnesses saw Castillo leaving the bathroom with blood on his hands.

Bautista said after Castillo left, he saw the bloodied Briones slumped on the bathroom floor.

Investigators found a plastic sachet containing suspected shabu residue, five pieces of crumpled aluminum foil and a lighter inside Briones' pocket. A kitchen knife was also recovered from the bathroom.

Police could not say if Briones was raped pending the release of the results of the autopsy and laboratory tests.

"We will pursue the case against the suspect and we will not stop until he is arrested and put behind bars," Gordon said. —Allen Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk

North expressway firm says toll hike justified

MANILA, North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) yesterday urged the public to look beyond toll rates to appreciate the economic benefits to be derived by Central Luzon from the new North Luzon Expressway (NLE).

Marlene Dolino, MNTC assistant vice president for public relations, said in a press release that "the P38 billion new NLE is envisioned to serve as catalyst for economic growth in Central Luzon which has been lagging behind Calabarzon in industrialization."

MNTC will take over operations and maintenance of the expressway before the year ends. MNTC will also implement a new toll rate system allowing motorists a per kilometer fee of P1.60.

Earlier, two Batangas officials, Brgy. Alas-Asin Mendoza and board member Renato Dimayuga called for an investigation of the proposed toll hike of as much as 400 percent.

In its release, MNTC said the proposed toll rates are reasonable and commensurate to the benefits users will get from the first-class expressway.

Motorists will also generate savings from lower vehicle operating costs. Citing results of a study made by the University of the Philippines Planning and Research Development Foundation, Inc. (UP Planades), Dolino said "at the end of the day, it is much cheaper to travel on the NLE in terms of fuel and wear and tear of vehicle and tollway fees."

The expansion of the capacity limit of the NLE by six to eight lanes to some portions, and from four to six lanes in other portions, was designed to accommodate a dramatic increase in vehicle volume without sacrificing speed and comfort.

Council orders poultry closed

BIÑAN, Laguna—The town council on Monday ordered the closure of a poultry farm in residential area in Barangay Sto. Niño here in response to a petition from residents who complained about flies and foul odor coming from the farm.

Using ordinances of the Local Government Code, the zoning and the town peace and order and health codes, the council ordered the immediate closure of the Tyson Agro Ventures Inc. upon the approval of Mayor Danilo Fernandez.

The farm, according to documents, is owned by former Zambales Rep. Hernando Perez.

A council investigation showed that the firm violated the ordinance code after health investigators confirmed the presence of large breeding (hotspot) in houses in Barangay Sto. Niño.

On a motion filed by Councilor Lucio Tolda, health committee member, the council considered the filing of civil and criminal cases against the poultry owners. Xavier Villaj, PDI Central Luzon Desk

INQUIRER Northern Luzon
Editor Joe Gonduyani
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Bishop brings message of hope in homecoming

BISHOP Oscar Solis is accompanied by his 89-year-old aunt, relatives, government officials and friends on his way to a thanksgiving Mass in San Jose City in Nueva Ecija.

By Arnaldine Roque
San Jose City

BISHOP Oscar Azarcon Solis, the first Filipino ordained as auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in the United States, sees himself as a symbol of hope for every Filipino.

"Bagaong arbasin ng gayon, sarabo bidas. Asin kare na (We may be eating rice and fish paste today, but tomorrow, it may be kare-kare)," Solis said in describing how his accomplishments could inspire other Filipinos.

Solis, 58, returned to his native San Jose City in Nueva Ecija on Thursday last week amid school's welcome. His homecoming was unlike the previous years' events, when he remained unrecognized.

Government officials led by Nueva Ecija Rep. Eleanor Nicolas and San Jose Mayor Alvin Violeta hoisted the bishop in his family's house on Gadlon Street on Saturday morning.

Together with priests, lay people, relatives and friends, Solis and local officials participated in a motorcade before he officiated a thanksgiving Mass at Our Lady of Charity Shrine in Barangay Malasin. More than 2,000 people attended the Mass.

The bishop said he was overwhelmed by the warm welcome given him even he arrived in the country early this month. He said he researched charity activities in his countrymen's way of showing him that he was "another symbol of hope for every Filipino."

"We have to be proud as a Filipino first, although we are in a Third World country our life and culture makes a difference in the lives of other people everywhere," he said.

Greater heights

Every Filipino has the chance to rise to greater heights, he said. "We just have to be faithful to our culture and be open to God, and the blessings will always be with us."

Looking back, Solis said he belonged to an ordinary family in San Jose, 110 km north of Metro Manila. His father, an insurance man, and his mother, a school teacher, supported seven children.

From a private Catholic school, Solis was transferred to a public school, where he finished his elementary schooling.

"Meskan dare ako sa pilas (we ate rice most days), dimala ako sa public school kang same nandoon ang mga anakwa ng mga teachers (My parents and I was embarrassed then, as I was transferred to a public school where my relatives were teaching)," he said.

At 11, he went to the Maria Assumpta Seminary in Cabanatuan City to finish high school and then to the Christ the King Seminary in Quezon City and to a seminary in Tagaytay City, where he finished his bachelor of arts degree in philosophy.

After he was ordained priest in 1979, he returned to Cabanatuan, where he became chaplain of the Araullo University. In 1981, at 28, he became rector of the Maria Assumpta Seminary.

Sidetracked

A few years later, Solis planned to go to Rome to pursue higher studies. But he decided to go first to the US for a vacation. While in the US, he became an associate pastor of the St. Benicio Church in Union City, New Jersey, and his plan to study in Rome was sidetracked.

In 1988, he decided to return to the Philippines, but Church officials and his parishioners convinced him to stay.

He stayed in Louisiana where he became associate pastor of the St. Joseph co-cathedral (Thibodaux), pastor of the Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church (Golden Meadow), and pastor of the St. Joseph co-Cathedral and St. Luke Church.

He said his appointment as bishop came as a big surprise. "Like no one is safe, it's quite flattering those I am received. I am like a big shot," he said.

And the welcome he received, he said, provided a message of hope for everybody. "In spite of who you are, no matter what is your station in life, you can expect graces from God."

On Aug. 22, Solis will say Mass at the Assumpta Cathedral and at the Christ the King Church in Quezon City. Before leaving the country, he will say Mass in Malaybalay on Aug. 23, upon the invitation of President Macapagal-Arroyo, for government officials and employees.

Solis was named "Outstanding Son of San Jose City" in a city council resolution passed on him by Mayor Violeta on Saturday. "Thank you all. I will be back," he told local officials and those who welcomed him home.

Solis said his biggest challenge as a bishop was to come up with pastoral plans and programs that would address the needs, resources and issues affecting all members of ethnic groups in his archdiocese.

Where he goes back in the US, he will be at his usual 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. work in the Divine Shepherd Center to shelter some Los Angeles where he is out raising the 200 parishes in his archdiocese.

And after the hearts that were offered him on his native land, Solis said he would go back to simple food and simple living in the US.

"Dito, back to pangan... pangarding ang ng pagkain at aking nararanang ramay (I'll be back in my country eating my leftovers that I have to endure for three months)," he said.

Visayas, Mindanao, magbantay para sa tamang bilang!

TEXTBOOK COUNT 2

Schedule and allocation of textbooks per region

Region/Division	No. of Pilot Schools	No. of Grade 1 Students	No. of High Schools	ENGLISH TOTAL	MATHEMATICS TOTAL
GRAND TOTAL (GRADE 1	4,122	140	1,248	3,731,847	
V TOTAL	1,168	237	1,168	1,731,848	
Regional Office				1,131	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Albay	178	8	78	110,818	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Catanduanes	208	23	208	23,577	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Camarines Norte	103	8	78	111,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Camarines Sur	1,001	78	78	136,716	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Sorsogon	78	8	78	111,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Legazpi City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Naga City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Masbate	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Sorsogon City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Iriga City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Tabaco City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Virac	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
VI TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Aklan	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Capiz	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Antique	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Iloilo	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Iloilo City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Bacolod City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Roxas City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Kabankalan City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
La Carlota City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
VII TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Negros Occidental	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Negros Oriental	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Cebu	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Bais City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Bayawan City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Canlaon City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Dumaguete City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Guihulngan City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Tagbilaran City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Tanjay City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Toledo City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
VIII TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Eastern Samar	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Leyte	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Northern Samar	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Samar	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Southern Leyte	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Tacloban City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Ormoc City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
IX TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Zamboanga del Norte	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Zamboanga del Sur	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Zamboanga Sibugay	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Dapitan City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Dipolog City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Pagadian City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Zamboanga City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
X TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Bukidnon	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Camiguin	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Misamis Occidental	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Misamis Oriental	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Cagayan de Oro City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Gingoog City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Iligan City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Malaybalay City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Valencia City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
XI TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Davao del Norte	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Davao del Sur	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Davao Oriental	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Compostela Valley	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Davao City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Digos City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Mati City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
XII TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Cotabato	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Sarangani	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
South Cotabato	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Sultan Kudarat	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
General Santos City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Kidapawan City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Koronadal City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
ARMM TOTAL, GRADE 1	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
CAR TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Abra	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Apayao	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Benguet	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Ifugao	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Kalinga	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Mountain Province	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Baguio City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Tabuk City	12	1	1	11,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
NCR TOTAL	1,018	78	1,018	1,000,000	
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Caloocan City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Las Pinas	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Makati	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Malabon	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Mandaluyong	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Manila	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Marikina	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Muntinlupa	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Navotas	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Parañaque	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Pasay City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Pasig City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Quezon City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
San Juan	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Taguig	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Valenzuela City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
ARMM	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Regional Office				1,000	Sept 08 - Nov 15
Lanao del Norte	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Marawi City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Lanao del Sur	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Maguindanao	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1
Cotabato City	100	8	78	100,000	Sept 08 - Oct 1

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Miriam: Include all reclaimed lands in probe

By Michael Lim Ubac

SENATOR Miriam Defensor-Santiago wants the Senate inquiry on Smokey Mountain project to include all lands reclaimed from Manila Bay.

Santiago yesterday told reporters that the Chamber should also look into the legality of the massive reclamation lead to the taipans—the Tan Yu Group of Companies, Henry Sy and John Gokongwei—and even the Catholic Church.

She said her views of the illegality of such transactions was based on the constitutional provision that "private corporations or associations may not hold such alienable land of the public domain, except by lease."

Santiago said that instead of imposing new taxes, President Macapagal-Arroyo should help recover all reclaimed lands sold or leased to private corporations without necessary laws.

She said that would help raise revenues for the cash-strapped administration.

According to Santiago, the "principle of retroactive invalidity" applies to all reclaimed land.

"Hence, the state should reacquire the contracts involved and reverse the funds from the present owners or lessees, or allow the lessee to stay, provided that Congress passes an enabling law for each transaction," she said.

Santiago said it was wrong for the government to agree to conclude allowing a corporation to survey lease reclaimed lands.

The Constitution expressly provides that the state cannot sell reclaimed lands, and as it should not merely receive a certain percentage of the profits but a much bigger amount, as payment for the leasehold," she said.

The senator dismissed former President Fidel Ramos' remark that she had been fed the wrong information by people with a political agenda.

She said her privilege speech on the Smokey Mountain project was based on information provided by "confidential informants." With a report from Christine D. Avendaño

Smokey Mountain agreement terminated in August last year

The original deal was signed in August 1994 by then Housing Secretary Jesus Garcia and Ramos, among others, who would be held liable for malversation of funds.

Santiago had said Ramos, among others, would be held liable for malversation of funds.

Chasing the money

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas reminded once her department, specifically the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, had yet to fully recover its investment in the Smokey Mountain project.

"The principal is back with us," she said. "We're following up the interest. That should be a hefty big amount of money since that money has not been returned since 1996."

Sto. Tomas reportedly drafted a letter to demand P625 million for the project.

Sto. Tomas said that the deal already ordered an investigation of the transaction, and that this had led to the removal of Nelberto Inocencio from the top Owwa post.

"The problem was not so much that it was inconsistent but that it was done without any board decision," said Sto. Tomas, referring to Inocencio's actions.

"You can't invest the money of a trust fund just on the whim of the [Owwa] administrator ... because it has implications and we always say that don't deserve to have the investment," she said.

In a separate interview, current Owwa administrator Virgilio Angeles said the agency had no choice but to invest P600 million in the Smokey Mountain project because of Malacañang's order.

He said the agency still had about P600 million in collectibles, which would be in the form of securities issued by the HDC.

Angeles said the Owwa had also taken steps "to avoid similar circumstances in the future."

He said the Smokey Mountain account had tied up much of the Owwa fund, a trust fund meant to provide welfare benefits for overseas Filipino workers.

"What happened was, the fund publicly turned it into a non-investment. And the other [at the investment] was that you don't have liquid funds that you can use for projects," Angeles said, adding:

"We hope that next time when we invest, it would be in liquid [assets] and not in real estate since it's also scarce."

All agreements superseded

As stated, the newest medium of agreement "contains the entire agreement between the [NHA] and the developer [R.S Builders] and supersedes any and all agreements between them."

The document also states the terms of contracts and amendment from the Ramos administration to the present.

The proposed joint venture agreement under the Arroyo administration, which involved the project, had envisioned a P3-billion housing and development project with 40 hectares of reclaimed land to be paid to the developer.

The was modified during the Ramos administration into a P6-billion project, to include townsite housing units for 2,000 squatter families. The floor area of the permanent housing units was adjusted from 20 to 32 square meters, thus doubling the cost.

To make up for the funding, the proposed reclamation area was increased to 79 hectares.

The Estrada administration reviewed the project, and later approved an amended contract increasing the reclamation area to 110 hectares.

In August 2001, the Arroyo administration upheld the Estrada administration's amendments to the agreement, and pegged the total project cost at P8 billion.

But two years later, it cancelled the contract.

Escheat proceedings

Sen. Richard Gordon said the Arroyo administration should initiate escheat proceedings to take back the reclaimed land from R-S Builders to prevent further losses to the government.

Speaking at a press conference, Gordon said the state had the inherent right to get back property that belonged to it.

In the days of old, escheat referred to the return to the English Crown of to the feudal lord the landholdings of a person who had died without an heir. It has since been associated with the return of land to the state.

But Gordon clarified that the government could not take property without "just compensation."

He said, in the developer should be reimbursed for all expenses.

But it is unclear whether R-S Builders should be entitled to reimbursement given Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo's claim that Ramos had misinformed the NHA when Ramos-S Publication to reclaim the land, "and then gave the reclaimed land" to him.

Santiago had said the arrangement was "executed in favor of a corporation, which has resulted in huge losses to the government."

"This is not just graft and corruption spelled out in seven letters, it is sheer, cold-blooded recklessness."

Commenting on Santiago's remarks, Gordon said she should act to go after those who had allowed Ramos to pursue the project. With reports from Ernie J. Pepito-Bugsa and Michael Lim Ubac

Rare bird found on Babuyan isle

President of Calayan said that they had seen "hundreds" of the "pidoy" and that they had even caught it for food in the past but they were unaware it was an unknown species.

The joint team of Filipino and British researchers, led by Lubcal, which is 74 kilometers north of Luzon and can only be reached by boat, for months before finding the bird last.

Dionisio said his group, the "Wild Birds Club of the Philippines, had also had visits from scientists with the Kadhi International, and learned that this species had never been recorded before.

He said that while the newspecies was "apparently not under threat," and that they had even caught it for food in the past but they were unaware it was an unknown species.

Rails are a type of ground-feeding, ground-nesting birds with strong legs, short tails and bills.

Filipino wildlife biologist Carmela Espejido made the discovery in May when she spotted a group of unfamiliar birds foraging in the undergrowth in the rain while walking through the rainforest.

Calayan is still largely covered by rainforest. It was last visited by ornithologists in 1983, according to Dr Richard Thomas of Birdlife.

Isolation

Biologist Genevieve Read, co-leader of the Filipino-British expedition, said isolation had protected the species from human encroachment.

"The island is 100 square kilometers and has only 5,000 people who are concentrated in one town in the south. There are few people in the middle of the island [where the bird was found] because there aren't any roads," she said.

Isolation has also proved disastrous for flightless birds in the past. Many that evolved on remote islands with no predators have become other biological curiosities.

"terrible[ness]" ... meaning they do not recognize danger from other animals.

So when humans first arrived on such islands in the past, they found the flightless birds to be easy sources of protein and often wiped them out—with the dodo of the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius being the most famous.

Most of the 222 species of rail already have become vulnerable. 1500 were flightless. Of the 20 being species of flightless rail, 13 are considered to be threatened.

"The Calayan rail is a reminder of the internationally familiar anomalous, with bright red bill and legs contrasting sharply with its dark plumage," Birdlife said in a statement. "But unlike its 6-million relative, the Calayan rail is flightless, or nearly so, and lives only on the island's mixed alien wildlife is ruined."

At risk from humans

"I find it quite stunned," said Dionisio. "Because they have been discovered, but this shows there is still a lot to be revealed to us. There may be other islands that have been overlooked by scientists."

The team estimated that there were 300-500 pairs of rails in Calayan.

"These newly discovered species are nearly always at risk from human influences, because most are on islands or mountaintops where their ranges are naturally very small," Birdlife's Read Dutson was quoted as saying.

Other species

"Flightless birds are the most vulnerable. Based on a history of extinction, we feel the Calayan flightless bird is at risk," he said. Inquirer wires

DENR test for metro air quality: Check your collar

Transcribe the full text of this article.

every blessed day were given two weeks to live, we would be dead by now."

Check the inside of your collar, said Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun. There's less grime there than it used to catch, because the air is "cleaner" now. She said a well-founded study is back up the claim.

On the other hand, word from the health department is that the air over the capital is just not safe. It quoted its own study, which found an increase in the number of respiratory cases over the past year.

All right. Gozun said during a press forum at the Trades hotel in Manila. Air quality was "not yet clean enough," but it had undergone "significant improvement" in the last decade. "You must recall how murky you could get walled back then. That's no longer the case."

The forum discussed a research handed by Asian Development Bank (ADB) on the impact of air quality on public health.

Speaking of which, health officials proclaimed a 2002-2003 study that listed air pollution among the causes of 100 "excess" cases of asthma, 139 "excess" cases of respiratory ailments, and 60 cases of cardiovascular diseases.

In the same, ah, breath, the Metro Monitoring Study of the Metro Manila Air Quality Improvement Sector Program recorded 100 "excess" deaths due to respiratory ailments, 200 "excess" cases of respiratory ailments, and 60 cases of cardiovascular diseases.

Gozun offered the "collar test" when the forum asked for visual indications of improved air quality this year. Instead of planning that in 2003, the now-issued summary of daily TSP monitoring showed that the pollutant levels recorded was 108 air, programs in Valenzuela, and 49% pick-up line—one Transportation Road in Quezon City.

That was just "two times higher" that the standard set by the 1999 Clean Air Act—230 micrograms per cubic meter—the said. Gozun said that in 1993, it was "four times higher."

The DENR chief attributed the improvement partly to her air quality which she had been being

Optimistic

"Hence" refers to numbers on top of the "usual numbers," supposed for the increase recorded monitoring stations. TSP measures the density of air, according to the DOH study, and increases mainly contributes to "excess" illnesses and deaths.

paid. Relative to this, she elaborated the beneficial effects of requiring vehicles to pass emissions tests. Prior to implementation, we had no equipment worldwide apprehension of smoke-belching vehicles.

This piece of good news seemed lost on the DOH, whose department tagged many vehicles as the major source of pollution. Binondo, it was located on congested and exhausting more than dozens others.

One of the 6,000 respondents that examined of children aged six to 13 had adults aged 18 to 64, the DOH said, frequent cough was reported in 11.8 per cent of the kids in "high exposure" areas, and 26.3 percent of those in "medium exposure" areas. Respiratory ailment symptoms were described as "prevalent" in the adults.

Growing smog cities and the inequities in Metro Manila, the study identified Caloocan, Valenzuela and Quezon City as "high exposure areas." Tapajo, Bitoon and Bang were labeled "medium exposure areas." Antipolo was the only area considered "low exposure."

The DOH study concluded: "The result of the ambient air quality assessment indicate that factor and particulate matter and its respirable fraction pose considerable health risks to the population in Metro Manila."

Whatever that means, exactly, it doesn't smell good.

NPA set to free 2 soldiers today

Transcribe the full text of this article.

"I feel I am away with mine just one time," Leah prayed.

A feeling that her husband's release was imminent ended Leah yesterday when she woke up to the sight of a military officer at the doorstep of her earthen bamboo apartment in Barangay Bonbon.

The officer had come to brief her for a brief medical examination in the camp hospital.

It didn't take more than 10 minutes before a military doctor arrived to see her. She is three months far rough the rugged terrain of Bicol to personally receive her husband from his captors.

Bible is reading

At Camp Aguinaldo, Antonio's older brother, Mariano, was just as excited.

He had arrived there in the morning after receiving word that Bonjol might be released soon. He left with his wife, clothed with newly pressed pants and shirt for his brother, also inside the bag was the Bible he had promised to give him upon his release.

Leah said she would probably leave behind her four-boy, 12-boy, 9-girl, 7-boy, 5-girl, 3-boy, 2-girl, 1-boy, 1-girl, 1-boy, 1-girl, 1-boy, 1

RP pins hopes on Tañamor's fists

By Artemio T. Engracia Jr.

ATHENS—The brightest of the country's faint Olympic medal hopes rides on the fists of Harry Tañamor Wednesday when he climbs the ring for his first bout of the boxing competitions at the Peristeri Olympic Boxing Hall here.

Tañamor, the lightest of the four Filipino boxers here at 48 kilograms, is expected to breeze through the lethal round against Mersali Dzorov of Tajikistan in a clash scheduled for 8:15 p.m. here (1:15 a.m. Thursday in Manila).

The 27-year-old Filipino has been ranked a potential bronze medalist by the Sports Illustrated in its Olympic preview issue, but his medal hopes have a potential stumbling block in the quarterfinals.

The luck of the draw has put him in the same boxer headed at the division's top favorite, Cuba's Yan Bartelemy. If they both get past this preliminary rounds, they clash in the quarterfinals.

A victory by Tañamor in that round, described by boxing leader Mel Lopez Jr. as the toughest in Olympic boxing, would secure him of a medal.

"If Tañamor wins in the quarterfinals, he could go all the way to the gold," said Lopez, former mayor of Manila and chairman of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines while his son, sharp president Mutya Lopez, serves in the jury of appeals.

The first two boxers to see action are crowned contending faces in the flyweight division (48kg/bought). Olympic Games host on present in Nonito Donaire and Rey Gabriel Saludar on Saturday for light welterweight bronze down to the last fire assignment, also on points over Sweden's Fredrik Bergene on Sunday.

Light welterweight Violito Payla was to fight Tulashboy Dzoyirov of Tajikistan late Tuesday night.

Lopez has been speaking for the Philippine boxing team while the boxers have refused to be interviewed, before or after the fight, in spites from the distraction.

Boxing has been the country's best hope for a gold medal in the Olympics. One of the nine medals won by Filipinos since the Philippines joined the Olympic movement in 1924 have been won by boxers.

Anthony Villanueva and Mansueto Velasco won silvers in 1964 (Tokyo) and 1996 (Atlanta), respectively. The bronze medals were won by Jose "Cely" Villanueva in 1932 (Los Angeles), Leopoldo Serantes in 1988 (Seoul) and Roel Velasco in 1992 (Barcelona).

This year is no different as the leaders of the Philippine delegation look to the boxers to carry the Philippines' hopes.

Tañamor is the brightest of these hopes and much is expected from him Wednesday night.

JASHIN Figueroa takes aim during her round-of-16 showdown with Spain's Almudena Gallarote at the Paralimnio Stadium in Athens. Among those in the gallery are PSC president Cito Dayrit (left) and PSC chair Eric Buhain (Wire from left). AFP/VOY V. KARAMITROS

Figueroa goes down fighting . . .

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took the first end with a string of 9, 9 and 8 while Figueroa faltered with scores of 7s—one was low and the other was wide—on her semi two arrows.

The Filipina fell back by five points in the fifth arrow when the last counted of her shot and had a 6. But she quickly countered with a 10 against her opponent's 8 after two ends.

Three points down, Figueroa stayed in touch with her opponent. Each time Sadkulu threatened to pull away, the Filipina archer answer greater strike would score a 10, as she did on her ninth arrow.

Figueroa fell back with three 8s while her opponent strung up three 9s to find No. 4. Down by six points going into the final four arrows, Figueroa rallied with another 10-or-low 10th arrow and completed the final end with 8, 7, 9.

Her hopes were raised when Gallarote stumbled with a 6 in the 19th arrow.

Figueroa watched as Gallarote aimed her final shot, needing a 6 to win the match. She shot a 7.

Thus ended Figueroa's dream-packed Olympic debut.

Despite congratulated Figueroa immediately after the match, telling her she fought a good fight.

"Sorang-sora lang, [ta] she did better than expected," Dayrit said. "We have a reason to be proud of her."

"It was a solid performance," said Buhain. "She had a good fighting heart."

Figueroa herself thought victory which would have moved her into the Round of 16 in the knockout matches, was within her grasp.

"Nasaling na talaga sana pasok-3 lab 3 [I had a chance to win]," she said. "Kaso 'nasa sa laho."

Her coach, Henry Matulong conceded her that her performance was more than satisfying. Her score of 208 was last two points off her personal best of 210.

"Ok na yun. At least, the match was done," he told Figueroa.

IMs Paragua, Rañola clash for Genova title

Standings after round 6

**GM—SM M. Paragua (PHI), 6½ / 6 (Adu (UZB), SM S. Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan), SM—GM F. Caruana (Italy), GM M. Leko (Hungary), GM V. Kramnik (RUS), GM P. Svidler (RUS), GM—IM D. Jakovenko (RUS), GM L. Aronian (ARM), GM S. Rublevsky (RUS), GM—IM A. Grischuk (RUS), IM E. Bacrot (France), IM—GM A. Morozevich (RUS), GM V. Ivanchuk (Ukraine), GM P. Leitao (Brazil), GM S. Movsesian (Slovakia), GM—IM V. Malakhov (RUS), GM—IM E. Bareev (RUS), GM—IM J. Ehlvest (USA), GM—IM A. Shirov (Spain), GM—IM M. Adams (England), GM—IM P. Harikrishna (India), GM—IM V. Bologan (Moldova), GM—IM B. Gelfand (Israel), GM—IM R. Ponomariov (Ukraine), GM—IM A. Volokitin (Ukraine), GM—IM A. Fedorov (Belarus), GM—IM A. Dreev (RUS), GM—IM E. Alekseev (RUS), GM—IM V. Tkachiev (France), GM—IM A. Kharlov (RUS), GM—IM A. Motylev (RUS), GM—IM A. Rustemov (Azerbaijan), GM—IM A. Khalifman (RUS), GM—IM A. Sokolov (France), GM—IM A. Beliavsky (Slovenia), GM—IM M. Gurevich (Turkey), GM—IM E. Najer (RUS), GM—IM V. Malaniuk (Ukraine), GM—IM A. Delchev (Bulgaria), GM—IM A. Hracek (Czech Republic), GM—IM A. Fier (Argentina), GM—IM A. Onischuk (USA), GM—IM A. Stripunsky (USA), GM—IM A. Ivanov (USA), GM—IM G. Kasparov (RUS), GM—IM V. Anand (India), GM—IM P. Eljanov (Ukraine), GM—IM L. Van Wely (Netherlands), GM—IM E. Inarkiev (RUS), GM—IM R. Rapport (Hungary), GM—IM M. Carlsen (Norway), GM—IM S. Karjakin (Ukraine

Tax credit row imperils revenue bills

From page A1

backs were freely transferable while TCCs were transferable under certain conditions.

Because the TCCs could be easily transferred, a lucrative secondary market developed. Some companies obtained from the extraordinary number fraudulent TCCs which were sold to them at discounts of 5 to 20 percent, according to an SSS official.

The DBM is run by the staff of the Bureau of Customs, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Board of Investments. It was created to provide a more speedy and efficient processing of claims for refunds under investment grants by various laws, including the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987.

The dismissal of the cases prompted some members of the House of Representatives to call for the suspension of finance and customs officials who handled the TCC scandal.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said both the police and the finance department should be held responsible for the government's failure to ensure that the tax cheats were properly punished under existing laws.

Rep. Gilbert Teodoro Jr. (Nacionalista Party, second district, Cavite) was more specific.

Suspend prosecutors

Teodoro said that government prosecutors who handled the TCC cases should be immediately suspended and investigated.

"Maybe the Ombudsman should start looking at their statements of assets and liabilities," he said, adding that some of those prosecutors may have deliberately refused to pursue the tax evasion cases hungry for extra money.

He said that only investigations would be needed unless the government could show it was capable of effectively prosecuting tax cheats.

Rep. Jack Lapus (Nacionalista People's Coalition, third district, Tarlac) blasted the dismissal on the BIR and the BOC's negligence to pursue the cases.

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez said the Department of Justice was not responsible for the government's loss in the tax collection cases.

No prosecutors involved

Gutierrez said at a press conference that it was the BOC that filed and handled these collection cases before the courts.

"The State were its prosecutors involved. These were collection cases handled by the deputy commissioner of the Bureau of Customs," she said.

The DOC, however is handling 1,431 criminal cases involving tax cheats with some of them being filed either before the Office of the Ombudsman or the Sandiganbayan, Gutierrez said.

She said that those cases involved firms that illegally acquired tax credit certificates and some of them were still under preliminary investigation.

Gutierrez added that the DOJ would pursue these cases and ensure that the tax cheats are convicted.

The Office of the Ombudsman is looking into the tax fraud cases, saying the governors, mayors, officials and businessmen involved in the matter may be liable for plunder charges.

In a telephone interview, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, who heads the team of prosecutors out to get those finance officials and businessmen who Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo said in the P5.3-billion tax credit scam, expressed alarm over the dismissal of the cases.

He said that while the Office of the Ombudsman only filed graft and results charges against those involved in the Congress tax credit scam, he said the office may now file plunder charges against those involved in the other cases.

Plunder

"If evidence warrants, we will go all out for plunder," he said, stating that some of the cases involved sums of money higher than the P50-million threshold for the filing of plunder charges.

The case against Filipino Shell, for example, involved P1.97 million, while the case filed against Integrated Textile Center involved P147 million.

He said he was coordinating with Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan, head of the Department of Finance's Revenue Integrity Protection Service, the group that is tasked with investigating revenue officers involved in graft irregularities.

One of the officials duplicated in the alleged scam was Deputy Customs Commissioner Gil Valera who, as head of the BOC's Revenue Collection Monitoring Group, had been tasked with investigating recovery efforts by filing and prosecuting civil collection cases.

In a telephone interview with the Inquirer, Valera denied having neglected the prosecution of the cases in the courts, resulting to their dismissal.

"It's very clear that the reason they were dismissed was because the State wasn't using fictitious names and addresses," he said. "As for the others, when we searched for their stockholders, directors were used or the persons with spurious identities were listed as stockholders."

"While that continues, how can we go after people who are no longer existing and their whereabouts can no longer be established?" he said.

Still, Valera said he had asked the Special Presidential Task Force 158 to go after those involved, but he stated that the agency could unmask the stockholders, considering that most of them are dummies.

Mishandled

Taking the floor shortly after the senator began, Pimentel asked the steps and measures Gutierrez said by Sen. Ralph Recto to look into "why the cases were allowed to be mishandled by functionaries in government."

He said the blue ribbon committee could also join in the investigations as he underscored the need to pursue the people responsible and send them to jail.

"It's about time that we send to the gallows if possible crooks in our society who are adding to their wealth by cheating the government out of its revenues," Estrella said.

In an interview soon after, Gutierrez said he got the same report of the dismissal of the cases the other day and that he was "shocked" by the outcome. She also said he was shocked that government was moving to settle the case.

"What is surprising is why they split the criminal and civil cases," Estrella also said.

He said at one point that officials were unable and incompetent.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago stood up to ask Estrella to continue on reports that the government lost the cases because it did not have enough prosecutors.

But Estrella said that he had not seen any indication that the government lacked prosecutors so he asked why it allowed that to happen.

"It seems to be the secretary of finance was hit as well," he said at one point.

Santiago also called for the chamber to investigate the matter. With reports from Philip C. Tubeza and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

Valera denies there was 'lack of interest to prosecute'

By Michaelle V. Bunoy

DEPUTY Customs Commissioner Gil Valera denied there was "lack of interest to prosecute" on the part of the Bureau of Customs, adding that the cases were dismissed because of technical issues.

The BOC was the prosecutor for the dismissed cases involving about P1 billion, while the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) was the prosecutor in one case, which involved over P600 million in bad checks.

But Valera said the dismissed cases numbered only 14 and not 15.

He explained to reporters that out of 14 respondents, eight were original recipients of TCCs and the remaining six were transferees, or buyers of TCCs that had been issued to an original recipient.

Valera explained that the 68 cases were dismissed because the de-facto trial they used the TCCs "in good faith," not knowing that the TCCs they bought were fraudulent. The remaining eight cases were dismissed, he explained, because the prosecutors used fictitious addresses and the court's subpoena did not reach them.

Valera said the BOC would just refile the 14 dismissed cases, and try to locate the respondents of the eight cases who used fictitious addresses. "We hope they did not use fictitious names," he said.

For its part, the BIR said it would file a motion for reconsideration with the Court of Tax Appeals since the prosecution agency receives the dismissal order from the court.

"We have not yet received the order, but we will refile the case with the CTA as soon as we receive it," said Deputy Commissioner Kim Henares of the BIR.

Henares said that while the BOC was alleged to have exercised carelessness in prosecuting the cases, the BIR could not be accused of the same because its prosecution team was "very active" in pursuing the cases and attending the hearings.

The Special Presidential Task Force 158, which Malacañang created to prosecute cases of fraudulent use of TCCs, is working to furnish it the signed dismissal of the 1469.

"In our case, we cannot prosecute because our main task is to investigate and recommend the filing of criminal and collection cases. Under the law it is within the jurisdiction of the BIR and the BOC to file the cases with the courts and prosecute," said Alan Abenes, executive director of the task force.

Abenes reiterated that the BIR and the BOC should be the ones prosecuting because the fraudulent TCCs were used to get tax credits from the two government agencies.

Abenes said it had been relegated to doing its task of investigating cases of tax fraud, but the fact is the last two months the task force had already recommended to the Office of the Ombudsman 633 criminal cases of tax credit fraud involving over P500 million in lost taxes.

Abenes said the task force had recommended to the Department of Finance that the BIR and the BOC be asked to explain why the cases were dismissed. He said Finance Undersecretary Juanita Ferrer de Jesus told the BIR and the BOC yesterday to submit a written report on the cases, including an explanation of how they pursued the cases.

Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
City of Manila

August 18, 2004

INVITATION TO SUBMIT LETTER OF INTENT/PROPOSAL FOR THE LONG TERM LEASE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD ARMY AND NAVY CLUB BUILDING

The Office of the City Mayor of Manila is inviting all interested persons and developers/investors to submit a letter of intent/proposal for the Long Term Lease and Development of the Army and Navy Club.

The proposed project is located in Luneta, Manila. The property is owned by the City of Manila, with a total land area of 12,666 sq meters.

Interested parties shall register and submit their letter of intent/proposal to the Bids and Awards Committee thru Atty. Jaime P. Valencia, Jr., Officer-in-Charge, City General Services Office, Room 104, City Hall, Manila with tel. nos. 527-9536 and 5279538.

By Authority of the Mayor

EMMANUEL R. SISON
Secretary to the Mayor

BOC exec not new to controversy

From page A1

Deputy Customs Commissioner Gil A. Valera was slapped in March with a six-month suspension by the Office of the Ombudsman for engaging in an illegal deal with a firm that owed the government P37,105,488 in customs duties and taxes.

Ombudsman investigators unearthed upon the P37-million scam while looking into Valera's statement of assets and liabilities. His net worth grew by 91.2 million in 2001 P26MM.

Valera, head of the BOC's revenue collection and monitoring group, was accused of entering into a "compromise agreement" with Steel Asia Manufacturing Corp., which reportedly paid P37 million in duties and taxes with the use of "fake, spurious and counterfeit" TCCs.

Later, it was found that Valera had no authority to enter into such a deal.

But Valera managed to fight off his suspension when he raised the matter to the Court of Appeals. He succeeded in getting the court to declare that the suspension was out of order. The Office of the Ombudsman has appealed the ruling.

Valera, meeting Wednesday with reporters, sources at the Office of the Ombudsman said there appeared to be a pattern in Valera's approach in dealing with tax cheats.

"It appears that rather than work to get payment from tax cheats, he is fond of filing cases against them in court, only to have the suit end up being dismissed for lack of interest on the part of the prosecution," a source said.

Penchant for settlement

A graft investigator also pointed to Valera's penchant for a 20 percent settlement, instead of the full payment, of the amount owed the government.

Following the compromise settlement, Valera is also believed to put into court records that the respondents "acted in good faith," thus freeing them of criminal liability.

"What I find very suspicious is how he defines the prosecution of the case when he needs to prosecute them immediately, considering the huge amount of funds involved," said a source affiliated of the Office of the Ombudsman, who asked not to be named. "I also find it odd that he does not file a motion for reconsideration after a case is dismissed."

Contacted by the Inquirer, Valera denied the charges, saying that he team had pursued the cases, but its efforts proved futile because many of the listed addresses in the alleged TCC scam were dummies and their board of trustees fictitious.

He said he was not inclined to go for the settlement of cases involving tax credit frauds.

In the steel Asia case, Valera initially charged the firm in a Manila Regional Trial Court with a "a civil case for collection of money with damages." He asked the court to issue a "writ of preliminary attachment" against the firm's assets in 2003.

No authority

Later, when the court was about to go after the firm's assets, Valera stopped the action by presenting to the court a "Joint Motion for the Approval of a Compromise Agreement" he had signed with Antonio Lorenzana, president of Steel Asia Manufacturing, to the effect that the firm agreed to pay its tax liability by installment from Jan. 29, 2003 to June 30, 2006.

But upon investigation, it was found that the deal was done without authority from then Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, contrary to law.

On July 23, 2003 certification, Bernardo denied authorizing Valera to enter into a compromise agreement with the firm on behalf of the Bureau of Customs.

The Tariff and Customs Code provides that only the customs commissioner, subject to the approval of the secretary of finance, may enter into a compromise agreement with any party to a case.

Thus, the Office of the Ombudsman said that it was clear that Valera "may have exceeded the bounds of his appointment when he signed" the compromise agreement.

"The compromise agreement is made more deplorable by the fact that respondent may have made statements that may be deemed highly injurious to the interest of the government," Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo said in his order suspending Valera.

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Deputy Editors Carmen R. Bitas, Lucio G. Digangi

Aguilar nephew nabbed in Zambo

By Lolit B. Salamero, Martin P. Misa and Luige del Puerto

BUKIDNON an alert area captain remembered his name from news reports, authorities said Wednesday as alleged accomplice of a 22-year-old Filipino-American who figured in a road accident that killed a Bukidnon lung official, to leave the country for Malaysia via Mindanao.

Jason Aguilar Ishiy was arrested by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation's Western Mindanao Regional Office and the Bureau of Immigration on board the MV Lady Mariejoy 2 as it was about to sail from Zamboanga City for Sandakan, Malaysia.

Immigration officials said police who acted on Ishiy's arrest were initially reluctant to turn over the person to them, but relented when National Bureau of Investigation agents told the group that Ishiy was the subject of a local deportation order.

NBI Director Reynaldo Olpoco Jr. and BI Commissioner Alipio Fernandez presented Ishiy before the media yesterday.

Ishiy had an outstanding arrest warrant issued by the Iloilo Metropolitan Trial Court, but was able to post bail. He was released from NBI custody yesterday afternoon, a hold departure order had earlier been issued against him.

Ishiy was at the wheel of a Toyota Corolla that had collided with the Isuzu Trooper driven by Undersecretary Nestor Pone Jr., Presidential Assistant for Resettlement at the C.V.O. Ojas Resort in Valencia City on Aug. 8. Pone died in the accident, while his wife Evangeline and Ishiy were injured.

The young man's mother, Marlene, a native of singer Freddie Aguilar, and elder sister of an Asian Development Bank official, yesterday said her son had been receiving death threats.

Because of the threats, the family said it was forced to post guards on a 24-hour watch for Ishiy, a psychology student at the Xiamen Pacific University who is here on vacation.

pkGAN Ishiy, nephew of singer Freddie Aguilar, is presented to media by NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco after he was arrested over by agents of the Bureau of Immigration who caught him while apparently trying to slip out of the country. (AP-MNS)

Marlene added that her son did not escape from the police guarding him at the Iloilo hospital in Maramag City, where he was treated for injuries.

Ishiy's lawyer Joseph Sagun-day, however, said he did not know about his client's plan to go to Malaysia.

Ishiy was nabbed on Monday afternoon after ship Capt. Joseph Tobias remembered reading about Ishiy in the newspapers, and became suspicious of the actions of Ingo Antonio Gutierrez, allegedly from Camp Crame's directorate for operations.

Bantinan reportedly asked the suspecting team not to disturb his friend Ishiy, who was resting inside the ship's cabin. Gutierrez allegedly gave Ishiy's passport to authorities for stamping later, and asked that the young man's name be excluded from the ship's list of boarding passengers.

On suspicions aroused, Ishiy was called for immigration at five in Zamboanga City to check out Ishiy's name in the hold list. Upon confirmation, immigration officer Julieta Madlambibi and two marines boarded the ship and asked Gutierrez to surrender Ishiy. Instead, Gutierrez allegedly offered $5,000 to the officials to forget he'd seen Ishiy go.

Now other police officers allegedly rushed to arrest Ishiy in Malaysia had disembarked when Ishiy was arrested. One of them was identified as Insp. Jeff Bersano IV, while the other was described as a "tanned one who spoke Tausug."

Philippine National Police spokesperson Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao said they were still verifying the identities of the police officers.

Ishiy is facing charges of reckless imprudence resulting in homicide, damage to property, and slight physical injuries.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer yesterday, the ADB said that as an institution, it enjoys certain privileges and immunities on the basis of the Headquarters Agreement with the Philippine government.

"However, Mr. Ishiy as a dependent of an ADB staff member, does not enjoy diplomatic immunity," the statement said.

Ishiy is the nephew of an ADB official.

"ADB is aware of the tragic accident which occurred on 8 August that resulted in the death of Undersecretary Nestor Pone Jr. We can confirm that Mr. Jason Ishiy is a dependent of an ADB staff member was involved in the accident," the statement said. "However, ADB considers this to be a personal matter between the parties concerned and ADB is not directly involved," it added.

Slain teller's parents sue condo execs

By Terry V. Quismundo

THE PARENTS of bank teller Candice Cuatro have brought their search for justice to the place where their daughter was murdered.

Rogelio and Grace Cuatro have filed a P1.5-million civil suit against PGJ Realty Development Inc., the firm that owns the Wellagio Tower on Leon Guinto Street, Malate, Manila.

In the suit filed before the Manila Regional Trial Court, the Cuatros said that the company was lax in securing the building, where their daughter had been dozing for more than a month before she was killed.

"The horrible killing of my daughter was directly brought about by the gross negligence of the defendants," said the Cuatros.

5 die as wall falls in Rizal

By Luige del Puerto

THE IMMEDIATE response of neighbors saved two children who were among seven people buried when a wall collapsed on a two-storey house in San Mateo, Rizal, the police said.

Their companions, identified as Mario and Dolores Arcota, Laurimarie Able, 20, Bobbie Llavilla, and year-old Black Vhon Llavilla, failed to make it out this rubble.

Neighbors frantically dug into ruins of the collapsed structure and pulled out Alvin Madrid Llavilla, 2, and Mike Arcota, 4, when the wall collapsed at almost 3 a.m. inside the Dayon Compound, Phase 4, Mariony Hills, Barangay Silangan.

Heavy rains and the darkness of the area prevented rescuers from reaching the five victims on time. Their bodies were recovered an hour later, the police said.

The police believed the ripsap (fine lumps) build the wall in place gave way causing an erosion of the soil that eventually led to the wall's collapse.

A ripsap is a wall made of cement and is usually used to prevent slopes or roads from eroding.

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AN UNDERWATER CAMERA captures a scene many feel will not happen in a long while... American Michael Phelps (left), Dutch Pieter Van den Hoogenband (center) and Aussie Ian Thorpe digesting the 2004 event's gold.

Loss starts US roster debates

ATHENS, Greece—The US men's basketball team could have brought a designated three-point shooter to the Olympics but decided on an extra big man instead.

That choice is coming back to haunt them, and the man in charge of the selection committee was on the defensive Monday when asked about it.

"It was a collective decision among the coaches and the committee to go that direction, and he was chosen," USA Basketball selection committee chair Jim Jackson said of Jordan Ghadie, who is languishing on the bench in the 12th man.

Coming off a shocking 92-73 loss to Puerto Rico, the American men will play Greece on Tuesday night in front of a hostile crowd whose prize head will no doubt be ransacked up ours that everyone but coach Jerry the US team is not just vulnerable, but breakable.

Meanwhile, Yao Ming bounced back from a rough opening game with 18 points and 13 rebounds to lead China over New Zealand, 69-62. AP

Davao gains PFF semis

BOXE Ten Bartilan scored twice to win the girls Dean Davao past Cebu, 3-1, and secure them a spot in the semifinals of the 1993 Interprimary National Under-19 Philippine Soccer Championship yesterday at the muddy Mac Elroy City Sports Center field.

Bartilan scored in the 30th and 42nd to ensure her status as in the final four of the event sponsored by the Philippine Football Federation and the Mandaluyong City Football Association and backed by Mayor Benjamin Abalos Jr. Fernando and the city government.

Earlier, Laguna pounded Rizal, 3-0, in Group C in the tournament backed by SuperBerry and supported by adidas, Red Ribbon Bakeshop, Pepsi, Brand New Magazine and Abante Express.

Legaspi Silliy upended Mindoro, 1-0, in another Group C match.

The National Capital Region and Oriental Mindoro were still battling at presstime. Cagayan Misamis ended its stint by blanking Isabela Region City, 5-0.

UM sweeps first round

DEFENDING champion University of Manila scored a 70-69 squeaker over the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Pasay to sweep the first round of the Shakey basketball tournament at the UM gym.

The Hawks nearly squandered an 18-point halftime lead and escaped with the win only after Chris Nava of 20-5 bungled a game-winning basket as time expired.

The victory was the eighth in as many outings for the Hawks of coach Lorrie Tolentino and manager Jaypee Ensano de los Santos. Overall, the win was the 81st in a row for the Hawks since the league's inception four years ago.

The Cardinals of University of Baguio president Jay Ramirez fell to 2-1 in the tournament sponsored by Panasonic, Spring Cooking Oil, PCSO, Dalgetis Lines, Nature's Spring Mineral Water, Cebu Pacific, the Philippines, Inquirer, Mega Mercury Drugstore and Modess.

Nava showed his versatility by adding three rebounds, three assists and two steals in a solid effort to win player of the game honors.

RACE OF THE CENTURY

Phelps bid 'Thorpedoed'

ATHENS, Greece—Michael Phelps couldn't catch the Thorpedo—and he won't be catching Mark Spitz, either.

Phelps' quest for seven gold medals ended after just three events, doomed by another bronze Monday night in the most anticipated race at the Olympic pool—the head-to-head showdown with Australia's Ian Thorpe in the 200 m freestyle.

Thorpe has ruled the event for years, but Phelps couldn't resist seeing what he could do against the man in black—part of the larger goal to break Spitz's record from the 1972 Munich Games.

He long seems charming smoothly through the initial waters. Thorpe passed Pieter Van den Hoogenband in the homestretch, finishing with an Olympic record of 1:45.00. Hoogenband clocked 1:45.71 seconds. The Dutchman's time was 1:45.23, while Phelps never caught the top two.

As he touched the wall, Thorpe quickly looked at the scoreboard and threw a fist to the air, yelling as if to say "Take that!" taken for sure a "1" beside his name—and a "2" beside Van den Hoogenband.

Yet Hoogenband, the defending Olympic champion, pulled off a shocking upset of Thorpe four years ago in Sydney. He got off to a quick start and was more than one second under world-record pace at the halfway point, but he couldn't maintain it and finished with the silver.

"Well, none are sure now," said Thorpe, who won the 400 m gold medal of his career and second of the Athens Games.

The 19-year-old Phelps was third most of the way netting an American record of 1:45.32 that was only good enough for bronze.

"It was tough racing the two greatest freestylers of all time," Phelps said. "I had fun out there. I did what I came to do."

Thorpe and Van den Hoogenband quickly clasped hands, while an exhausted Phelps clung to a lane rope, watching a replay of the race on the video board. Finally, he pulled himself out of the water and climbed to the opposite side.

Two other Americans did claim gold on this night.

GREATEST foes, maligned by some... Phelps (left), Thorpe (center) and van den Hoogenband (take their medals). AP/WIRE

Natalie Coughlin won the 100 backstroke, falling short of her own world record but holding off Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe. France's Lenie Manaudou took bronze, her second medal of the games.

Aaron Peirsol was first in the men's 100 backstroke, the first gold medal of his career. Markus Rogan of Austria claimed silver and Japan's Tomomi Morita held off Americas Lenny Krayzelburg for the bronze.

Krayzelburg, who won three golds in Sydney, fell short of a crucial in his only individual event by just two 1000ths of a second.

Leo Kaylaan of China won gold in the 100 breaststroke, beating Australians Brenke Hansen and Leisel Jones.

An Olympics that has been plagued by poor crowds didn't have any worries on this night. The 14,000-seat pool was packed—orange-clad fans cheering on Van den Hoogenband, Thorpe's opponents distinguished by their yellow and green attire. Phelps' backers waving American flags big and small. AP

Federer in 'hot' debut

ATHENS—Swiss gold medal favorite Roger Federer lost his seed at the Olympics on Monday in a rare flash of temper that screwed to win his next to eighth-ranked second on Monday.

He beat Fernando Vegondorlez, 6-1, 3-7, 6-1, but reversed an official assuming he had about after hitting it on to the roof of the centre court in frustration at the start of the second set.

As the time, he was trailing 3-0 but recovered to serve for the match at 5-4 before inadvertently.

"It's a long time since I got my last warning," the world number one told a news conference.

"The first it was a slips, I needed to just throw a reaction because I was unhappy with the way I played in the second set.

"I got frustrated. But the important thing is I won, not how I acted on court."

Federer eventually eased through the third set after switching to serve-volley tactics.

"I had to play fast against him and I played faster when I served for the (second) set," he said.

"I was happy to be through. That's what counts in the end, not really how I'd have liked to win in straight sets but it didn't happen."

The Swiss, who won the Australian Open at the start of the year and also successfully defended his Wimbledon title in July, is desperate for an Olympic medal having just missed out on a bronze in Sydney in 2000.

Despite his patchy display in blustery conditions on Monday, Federer said he preferred to conserve energy for the positive.

"The conditions weren't easy today as there was a lot of wind," he said. "I'm happy, I know I can definitely play better than I did but the important thing is to get through.

"That's what's good of myself. I am the big favorite and I want to take advantage of it." Reuters

Country	G	S	B	Total
China	32	17	14	63
Australia	16	16	17	49
USA	15	13	11	39
United States	11	9	11	31
Japan	9	12	11	32
Italy	9	7	5	21
France	8	5	9	22
Ukraine	8	4	5	17
Canada	6	3	3	12
Germany	5	6	4	15
Greece	5	6	3	14
Korea, South	5	4	3	12
Hungary	5	3	3	11
Cuba	5	3	2	10

Country	G	S	B	Total
Canada	6	3	3	12
Germany	5	6	4	15
Greece	5	6	3	14
Korea, South	5	4	3	12
Hungary	5	3	3	11
Cuba	5	3	2	10
Netherlands	4	9	3	16
Spain	4	3	3	10
Poland	4	2	3	9
Romania	4	1	3	8
Belarus	3	4	1	8
Bulgaria	3	3	2	8
Brazil	3	2	4	9
Russia	3	2	3	8
Denmark	3	1	2	6
Indonesia	3	1	1	5

Buhain lauds RP athletes

ATHENS—Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain lauded boxer Romeo Brin and archer Jasmin Figueroa on Tuesday and called Filipino athletes to strive harder in their drive to win a medal.

"While we are one step closer to a medal, we are one step away with the rest of our countrymen in seeing a Filipino up there on the podium, hopefully with the gold medal, and hearing our national anthem being played," Buhain said.

Brin outclassed the taller Ugandan-born Patrick Bogere of Sweden, 45-35, in their light welterweight clash on Sunday to earn a second round berth, making up for Christopher Cassod's early exit from the mid-flyweight category on Saturday.

While praising Brin's big fighting heart, Buhain was amazed by Figueroa's "miracle of an upset" seven days into Olympic assistant and former world champion Natalia Valeeva off-lady in the Round of 64.

"That (Figueroa win) was totally huge. That was a miracle of an upset considering the stature of her foe," Buhain said. "But Jasmin was awesome, she showed what a Filipina's heart is made of."

The PSC chief also expects the Philippine taekwondo team to break the jinx of Sydney, where the 80-contingent went home without a medal.

Iloilo snaps skid

ILOILO CITY—Carlos Dagon is snapped out of his slump in the Iloilo Warriors subdued the visiting Baguio Cardinals, 87-84, Monday in the 30th National Basketball Conference finals at the University of San Agustin gym here.

The 6-foot-3 forward swapped off with a season-high 29 points, 11 in the fourth quarter, to halt the five-game skid of the Warriors of Bungga frontrunner Robert Uy.

SHANG CINEPLEX

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

A CINDERELLA STORY

THE STEPFORD WIVES

THE VILLAGE

THE STEPFORD WIVES

Shangri-La Plaza

Juvic shoots 8-over

JUVIC Peponnet struggled with an 8-over par 80 playing in bad weather on Monday (Tuesday) and was in danger of early elimination in the 18-hole US Amateur golf championship at the Philgolf Pines Golf Club in Alamosawash, New York.

Tackling the rain course, Peponnet started the day with a birdie but bogeyed the next two. He also made a double bogey on the par-5 fourth and went five over through the back.

He was in a tie for 38rd out of the 312 starters with 36 players still to complete their rounds as play was suspended due to inclement weather.

Only the top 64 will advance to the match play tournament proper to round-long Wednesday.

Oscar Alvarez of Colombia, behind first birdies were his last 12 holes, shot a 3-under par 67 at the East Course for a provisional three-stroke lead.

Spencer Levin, Jason Hardwick and Luke Guy shared second place with even-par 70s.

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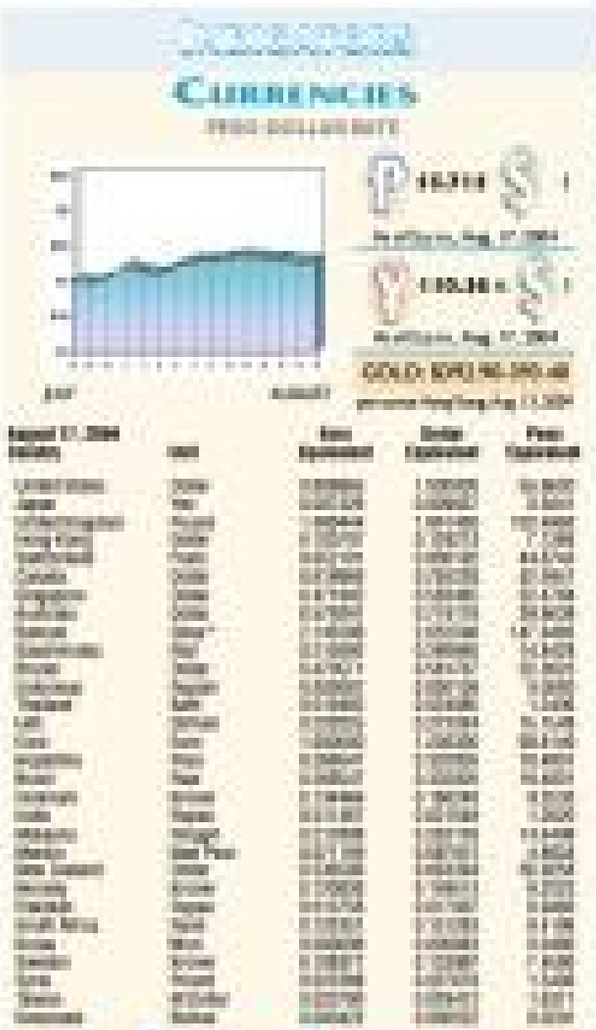
Back on your feet within hours of losing important files to theft, disaster or IT failure

Big jump in local pump prices looms



By Abigail L. Ho

MTPI would oil prices spiraling to bizarre highs, the advocacy group Consumer and Oil Price Watch yesterday warned of "substantial" increases in the pump prices of petroleum products in September if the current uptrend continued.

The benchmark Dubai crude used by oil refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. in pricing their products soared to $50.65 a barrel Monday, demolishing the previously set all-time high of $38.90 in May 13.

The price surge pushed the Aug. 1-16 average up to $39.87 a barrel, up by almost $4 from the July average of $34.65 a barrel.

Unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products likewise jumped to $52.88 a barrel on Monday, driving up the August average to $51.27 a barrel from only $46.51 a barrel last month.

The price of MOPS-based diesel, on the other hand, also increased to $52.31 a barrel the same day, further pushing up the August average to $50.75 a barrel, more than $4 higher than the July average of $46.21 a barrel.

COPRI Chair Raul Concepcion noted that price movements during the week ending Aug. 6 and the one ending Aug. 13 showed an increase of $8.05 cents a liter on the gasoline and $4.08 cents a barrel for diesel.

Dubai crude during those two weeks posted an increase of 44.05 cents a barrel, he added.

Since though Concepcion projected a "substantial" oil price increase in September if August prices would not let up, he said oil firms should take into consideration the Department of Energy's suggestion to implement more frequent price increases in smaller amounts than one big price adjustment.

He said any increase that oil companies would have to implement next month should be done on a "staggered basis" so as to cushion its impact on consumers.

He also asked oil refiners Petron and Shell to join other first-tier businesses for gasoline with their usual discounts for diesel instead of raising prices.

Some oil players raised the prospect of gasoline and diesel by $5 per liter or more on Monday in response to the spike in world oil prices.

Since the beginning of the year, gasoline prices have risen eight times for a total of P5.05-P5.20 a liter, while diesel prices have gone up seven times by a total of P4.40-P4.6 a liter.

But yesterday, oil prices fell as fears abating on fears of a strike in oil-rich Venezuela resulted following President Hugo Chavez's victory in a referendum on his rule, dealers said.

Chavez's victory was sufficient to calm investors' anxieties after fuel-rich Venezuela pushed the cost of oil to a record $44.91 on Monday on fears of supply disruptions as workers stalled key oil exports.

The Venezuelan leader had warned an opposition victory in the referendum would lead to the privatization of the state oil firm Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) and prompt oil workers to strike.

"In the countries of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, I really feel (a) government guarantees the stability of the world's oil market and the integration of Opec to defend the interests of our people," he said in a victory speech.

Venezuela is the world's fifth largest crude exporter with daily production of 2.7-2.8 million barrels. With a report from AFP

CONCEPCION

Epira: Key to heading off power crisis

(Last of three parts)

By Abigail L. Ho

SPECIAL REPORT

EXPOSÉ: Act No. 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), was meant to put order in the power sector by privatizing the National Power Corp. and opening some components to the market.

With Epira, government hoped to make the power sector more attractive to investors.

According to Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, allowing the private sector to acquire some of Napocor's generation assets, particularly those in Luzon and the Visayas, would result in a competitive market where each player would strive to be the most efficient and cost-effective.

It would be the consumers who would benefit in the long run, Perez said.

Napocor privatization

So far, the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), the agency tasked to privatize Napocor's assets, has sold three of the 10 plants on the auction block: the 531-megawatt (MW) Calaca bituminous-fired power plant in Batangas to the Mirant group's Hopewell Holdings Ltd. for $57.37 million; the 1.4-MW Agus and Pulangui hydroelectric plants in Bukidnon to the Lopezes' First Generation Holdings Corp. for $13 million; and the 1.8-MW Bais hydroelectric plant in Negros Oriental to Nations Consolidated for $900,000.

PSALM, as the point man in control of key role in ensuring a power crisis by restructuring and reforming the power sector.

By mid-2005, PSALM would have privatized at least 70 per

RP still locked in free trade talks with China

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES, still locked in free trade talks with China, has drafted a list of 175 commodities that would be included in the so-called early harvest program between the trading partners.

According to Raphael Bernardo, Department of Agriculture undersecretary, the Chinese negotiators have allowed to trade 400 of their products in our country and are prepared to open up China to Philippine commodities.

The DA officials informed the original Chinese list of 400 commodities down to 175 to protect local farmers, vegetable growers and poultry raisers.

Although it is important for the Philippines to gain access to Mainland China which—with a population of over 1.18 billion people—offers a huge market for RP products, Philippine officials must still insist on denying the entry of Chinese vegetable, pork, chicken, rice and corn products.

"The Early Harvest Package would definitely be beneficial to the big exporters, such as the bananas and pineapple plantations here," Serrano said. "But we must emphasize that the small producers, like the vegetable producers, stand to risk much with the entry of Chinese products."

DA and Department of Trade and Industry officials have vowed to explore to be part of the Asean-China Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation.

"We are afraid that Philippine business and economy will be totally left out," said incoming Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap. "We were chided by the new Chinese ambassador that we were the only Asean Association of Southeast Asian Nations member who did not join the early harvest program."

Yap said that since the early harvest program started in March 2003, Philippine agriculture products are losing market share to other Asean countries, specifically in coconut product exports.

Unlike the Coconut Level Tariff and Related Matters Committee voted to reject the Philippines' entry to the early harvest program because of China's restrictions on limiting the program to Chapters 1 to 8 of its tariff code, which cover mainly unprocessed agricultural products.

The Philippines, which was supposed to submit its list of products for inclusion in the early harvest program last March 1, would continue to negotiate with China to widen the product sectors that would be granted preferred duty access to the mainland.

The DTI said that the early harvest program would have been more palatable had China agreed to open up its market to more Philippine industrial products, specifically the export winners such as motor vehicle parts and semiconductors.

The early harvest program was meant to give Asean countries a reward entry to China, which generally imposed higher tariff rates, before the start of the free trade agreement. But China has maintained full sovereignty that is growing and overtaking the services of 10 ports as the other members of the Asean market.

YAP

DTI bars Solid from selling cement

By Roland W. Domingo

THE TRADE Department has ordered one of the country's largest cement makers to stop selling its products for failure to pass quality standards.

In a notice to distributors and retailers dated Aug. 12, the DTI said Solid Cement Corp., maker of the Island cement brand, was ordered "to cease and desist from selling, distributing, delivering and disposing Island Cement or any bound items in the firm's Antipolo plant) to bulk out to buyers."

The preliminary order came after DTI product tests showed that there were too much impurities in the products, thus, lowering its strength.

"We cannot risk public safety by allowing the continued distribution of substandard cement," Trade Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal said.

He explained that the order was a preventive measure to protect consumers while the case was being heard.

"Island Cement has failed several mechanical and chemical tests of the Bureau of Product Standards and the Department of Public Works and Highways's Bureau of Research and Standards," he added. "That brand must be banned from the market."

BPS director Jesus Mercurio said Islad cement tests showed that Island Cement has consistently fallen below the minimum compressive strength required by Portland cement.

Portland cement is so named after the Isle of Portland in the English Channel, as the cement mix resembled the color of natural limestone mined from that place.

DTI data showed that as of end-2000, Solid Cement, a member of the Cemex group, was the third largest local cement firm with a production capacity of 2.23 million metric tons a year.

The firm's plant in Antipolo City, Rizal, accounted for 8.5 percent of the country's total capacity.

Cemex Philippines' other subsidiaries are Apo Cement and Rizal Cement Co. which, respectively have production plants in Cebu and Mandaluyong City and Binangonan in Rizal.

Overall, Cemex's Philippine operations add up to a total production capacity of 8.8 million metric tons a year.

Subic exports up 19% to $454M in first 7 months

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT ZONE—Exports from this freeport increased by as much 19 percent during the first seven months of this year, according to the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

SBMA Chair Felicito Payumo said exports recorded as of July this year reached $454 million, from $383 million posted in the same period last year.

"Export performance of Subic freeport-made products remains strong for the past seven months and we are confident that manufacturing firms here would maintain this upsurge into the end of the year," Payumo said in a statement.

Rod Tullao, manager of One-Stop Export Documentation Center of Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), said that in May alone, exports hit $89 million, representing a 7% percent increase over the same month last year.

The May figures were the highest during the seven-month period this year, Tullao said.

Western Intelligent Philippines, a Taiwanese firm manufacturing computers, remained the top Subic exporter posting an export value of $119.7 million, accounting for 7% percent of total export earnings.

Although Western's export contributions dropped last year due to the global slump in demand for computers and other electronic products, the company remained the top employer among Subic freeport investors with more than 3,000 skilled workers.

The increase in export contributions was also attributed to non-electronic value-added products like processed wood, high-end garments, jewelry and even aircraft parts production, the statement said.

Top importers during the period include Sanyo Denki, a Japanese company that imports parts totaling with $23 million worth of export products, and Japanese electronic manufacturing firm, Omron, which produced $22 million worth of automated teller machine (ATM) parts.

Japanese wood processor Isham Sangyo imported $18 million worth of products. — Jun Mascarenas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Sidetracked at Citra

CITRA, the Indonesian company that built and operates the Skyway, is scheduled to hold a board meeting next Wednesday to discuss the fate of its current president/CEO, Cesar Quiambao.

If you believe the company grapevine (the Indonesian principals, including minority partner Metro Pacific Group, seem to have already found a replacement).

The rumored departure of Quiambao, an accountant whose fortunes hit the fast track after negotiating and working for an Indonesian logging concern and marrying a local, comes in the wake of the now hard-line stance being taken by the Jakarta office on the some P50 million in "advances" extended by Citra to a Quiambao company.

That and other alleged advances have reportedly remained unpaid since the long years.

Quiambao is also engaged in a nasty lawsuit with his Filipino partners in Stradec, the IT holding company that has won the biometric contract for passports as well as the nationwide computerization of land titles and drivers' licenses.

The suit, now being heard in the Pasig Regional Trial Court, stemmed from the foreclosure on a P200-million borrowing by Stradec, where Quiambao was an erstwhile minority partner.

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aguirre

After the foreclosure, wherein its passage of Stradec's stake had been pledged as collateral, Quiambao stalled up, rode, as the majority owner of Stradec, after having bought back from the creditor the pledged shares unknown to his Stradec partners.

Going back to Citra, the re-

mained boardroom realignment is apparently part of the grand plan of Metro Pacific/PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan to complete the Skyway project to Alabang and, at the other end, to Sta. Mesa, as well as upgrade the South Luzon Expressway and expand it all the way to the Batangas port.

MVP does not sit in the Citra board, but MPC president Jose Ma. Lim does.

MVP has apparently rounded up the support of the Indonesians, including their pointsman, Citra chair and Bobcats speaking sergeant-at-arms Jose Magno, as well as Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima as to the importance of the

infrastructure, especially highways for the country and, for Citra, to finally put it on the road to profitability.

Reason to rejoice

SOLOMON-LINER ICTSI is lately observing all-time flash-chart highs of the stock being a diamond in the rough.

The week hit a high of P3.60 yesterday before closing at P3.78, from last week's P3.20, on the back of the company's disclosure that its profits doubled in the first half of the year compared to last year's.

According to speculator Bobcat de la Pena, the market also likes the fascinating that harbour Centre, a potential competitor of ICTSI, is scrutinizing Iran-bou, Mindanao-Batangas and the media.

Limited to small pickings in non-containerized cargo services in its near-but-controversial North Harbor port, Harbour Centre obtained assurance in March an opinion from the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel that it, too, can diversify into the big-game containerized cargo services.

That business currently only has two players, ICTSI and the smaller Australian-controlled Asian Terminal Inc.

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Key reforms needed to make RP creditworthy, survey shows

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES must accomplish 10 herculean tasks involving key reforms in its socio-economic and political structures to boost its sovereign creditworthiness, a survey of global credit rating agencies showed.

Saddled by huge debts inherited from previous regimes, the Philippines needs to establish a track record of fiscal discipline, the government's revenue collection officer Cita Guidote said in attending panel discussion.

Citing a recent survey conducted by her office among global credit rating agencies, Guidote said businesses among those tasks were to broaden the country's tax base.

Also, global rating agencies believe that the country needs to make improvements in the value of public revenue to gross domestic product and to reduce the excess of external and government debts to GDP to boost its investment credit rating.

The other "must-dos" cited by the rating agencies in the survey were the following:

- strengthen the financial sector;
- enhance regulatory and structural effectiveness and integrity;
- privatize the National Power Corp. and reconsider its debts;
- achieve rational asset reallocations in order to increase liquidity and leverage investments;
- improve political stability and predictability;
- strengthen democratic institutions; and
- increase internal security.

The Philippines is currently rated one notch below investment grade by major credit rating agencies such as Moody's Investor Service, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings.

Guidote said these agencies believed that recent gains were still modest and that the country was still "erratic" and "unpredictable" in attaining economic and fiscal targets.

"There's a perceived lack of fiscal discipline," she said. "Before we still have to be institutionalized."

Guidote said the tasks identified during the survey were relevant by President Macapagal-Arroyo's economic agenda for the world would exert progress in their implementation.

She said the Philippines would hold its fourth investor road show next month "to tell the world it has problems but is carving out solutions for it."

Guidote said the roadshow would be bigger this year and would target not just the fixed income market but also foreign direct and equity investments.

The government had tapped BMC Plc, as the global coordinator for Asia and Europe while Citigroup and JP Morgan would be the coordinators for the US leg. The roadshow will start on Sept. 20 and will cover Singapore, Hong Kong, London, Frankfurt, Zurich, Geneva, Boston and New York.

JG Summit 1st half net income down 20%

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GOKONGWEI JR. Summit Holdings Inc. said its first half net income reached only P1.38 billion in the first half, lower by 20 percent from P1.72 billion in the same period last year.

The profit decline was attributed largely to losses incurred by its wireless phone business and the drop in the earnings of its financial services unit.

Consolidated revenue grew 13.1 percent to P20.85 billion in the first half from P26.4 billion last year.

Gross profit for the first half hit P9.04 billion from P7.89 billion, up 14.7 percent.

Operating expenses grew 14.6 percent to P7.56 billion due to the huge expenses incurred by its wireless phone operations and expenses for the expected expansions of its foods business.

Borrowings incurred JG Summit's onerous expenses by 25.6 percent to P15.91 billion from P12.36 billion.

Telecommunications arm Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc. reported a net loss of P693.4 million in the first six months, from a net loss of P479.6 million during the same period last year.

Revenue from both wireless and land line businesses rose 11.0 percent to P3.3 billion from P3.1 billion.

But the revenue gains were wiped out by huge expenses, which grew 11.9 percent to P5.2 billion. Digital posted an operating loss of P181.1 million, higher than last year's P91 million.

Food and beverage subsidiary Universal Robina Corp. reported a 7.8-percent growth in revenue in the first semester, driven by its branded consumer foods business and expanding operations in Southeast Asia.

First Metro profit drops to P369M from P1.14B

FIRST Metro Investment Corp., the investment banking arm of the Metrobank Group, recorded a drop in first half net income to P368.9 million, from P1.14 billion during the same period last year.

Last year's income, however, was boosted by P792 million in extraordinary gains.

FMIC president Francisco Sebastian said in a statement, however, that the company was on the way to meeting its full year income target.

"Our treasury operations continued their strong and steady performance, while the investment banking group managed the Globe Telecom and Udenver debt issues in the first semester," Sebastian said.

"We also look forward to a number of investment banking deals to materialize as a result of renewed confidence after the stabilization of our political processes," Sebastian added.

FMIC's gross revenue hit P675.1 million during the period, with treasury income contributing P346.2 million and investment income, P300.5 million.

Investment banking and investments administered assets contributed P65.5 million.

In July, FMIC landed among the top three selling agents of the Bureau of Treasury's retail treasury bond issue, selling over P4.5 billion in bonds.

On the private sector debt, FMIC was appointed as the lead arranger of the issue managers of the public bond offering of conglomerate Ayala Corp.

Elizabeth Sanchez

Ayala Plans increases trust fund by 36%

AYALA Plans Inc., one of the leading pre-need companies in the country, said it had boosted its trust fund by 36 percent to P2.203 billion in the first semester of this year, up from P1.614 billion in the same period last year.

The company report said it had P1.420 billion in its trust fund by 31 perfect-time, up 17 percent from P1.094 billion in the same period last year.

The P75.36 million in its trust fund for its education line is 26 percent more than the P171.32 million it had a year ago, the report added.

"With a bond manager (BPI Asset Management and Trust Group or BPI AMTG) that is the largest in the country, plan holders can feel secure that Ayala Plans will be around to meet its future obligations and fulfill its promises", said Louie L. Mahler, Ayala Plans' President and CEO.

The company markets a certificate of investment this year.

Ayala Plans opened two trust funds with BPI AMTG in December 1994 with an initial amount of P400,000.

Ayala Plans' pre-need trust funds' up to considered among the fastest in the pre-need industry with an average trust fund growth rate of 41.7 percent per year for the last five years.

In line with its strategic expansion, Ayala Plans also infused P138 million in new capital in 2003.

Despite of the challenging investment environment, Ayala Plans continues to strengthen and manage its aggressive sales growth and marketing programs, and improve both the quality and quantity of its agency sales force.

Ayala Plans is one of the few pre-need companies in the Philippines with a trust fund that is 100 percent liquid and with zero real estate properties in the fund portfolios.

"The company has been conservative with its financial management and has consistently maintained its deposits in the trust fund at levels beyond values is required by the law," the company said.

Ayala Plans Inc. is a subsidiary of the Bank of the Philippine Islands, one of the largest banks in Southeast Asia, and a member of the Ayala Group of Companies.

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DISCLOSURES

MEETINGS: Inc. will buy First Advanced Multimedia Entertainment Inc. a proprietary and customized Internet and mobile intermediate platform company, Africa. Also through will increase its authorized capital stock from P100 million to P150 million. It will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Oct. 1.

* * *

PETROENERGY: Resources Corp. declared cash dividends of P0.20 per share to holders of stockholders of record as of Aug. 31 and will be payable on Sept. 24.

* * *

WATERFRONT: Philippines Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Sept. 4, 10 a.m. at the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel. Stockholders of record as of Aug. 11 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

BANK: The BPI/MBTC has the bid to acquire Equitable PCI Bank now "down to the wire," Reuters' Bea Cho Unlimited Bank clarified that the talks of the deal were still proceeding with the Mandaluyong City Regional Trial Court. *Compiled by Marcial B. Salaya, PDI Research*

China Eximbank offers loans for railway projects

By Charlene S. Becbec

CHINA'S Export-Import Bank has offered to bankroll the controversial Manila-Clark Rapid Railway System or North Rail project amid the controversy of a $1-billion railway system that will run from Caloocan to Clark, sources said.

A government source said the China Eximbank had expressed interest in financing Philippine National Railway's North Manila Commuter Railway system that would cover the Malolos-Clark route.

The PNR operates the railway system that runs from Caloocan to Calamba and the one from Caloocan to Bicol. However, the existing line to Bicol is in bad shape.

Sources said the Chinese and Philippine authorities have started negotiations for the financing of the new project.

China Eximbank has offered to provide a $900-million funding for the 500-kilometer project, or double the $505 million pledged for the $505-million North Rail project.

The North Rail project is being criticized for its cost, which was estimated to reach P1 billion for every kilometer.

Transport Undersecretary Jose Castro, who is in charge of the North Rail project, said the cost per kilometer was P439.26 million.

Castro said the North Rail was a double-track system that would run from Caloocan to Malolos, Bulacan, spanning 64.3 km and not 32 km.

"China Eximbank has expressed willingness to provide a loan in the form of official development assistance. Officials of PNR went to Beijing to discuss Chiba's proposal," a government source said.

A contractor based in Beijing is expected to submit a feasibility study to the National Economic and Development Authority.

Another source said the Arroyo administration wanted the Chinese government to improve its offer to PNR.

Negotiations between China and the Philippines over the PNR project would be pursued during President Arroyo's state visit to China on Sept. 2-6, according to sources.

During the visit, China Eximbank and North Rail officials are scheduled to sign a $505-million loan agreement.

The improvement of the country's infrastructure system, especially mass railway transport, forms part of the Arroyo administration's priority projects.

Last May, the government signed South Korea's multilateral lending institution for a $501.5-million long-term loan that would cover part of the P16.6-billion rehabilitation of the PNR's northern route.

The first phase of the project covers the leasing of the station premises and improvement in the communications facilities.

The rehabilitation of the 32-km Caloocan-Malolos line would speed up the travel time to 30 minutes for the whole route.

After the upgrade, the South Manila line could carry roughly 197,000 passengers per day using 11 units of new diesel railcars to be acquired under the project. It also covers the improvement of 15 stations.

Korea's development fund will provide a $35-million loan while the Export-Import Bank will contribute $15.42 million to complete the foreign component of the project financing. The government will provide the local component equivalent to $14.26 million to secure right-of-way and provide infrastructure support.

8 firms vie for PNOC's gas pipeline venture

By Abigail L. Ho

EIGHT foreign firms with local partners have expressed plans to undertake the engineering and design work of the $500-million Batangas-Manila (FEED) natural gas pipeline project of the Philippine National Oil Co.-Exploration Corp.

These include Petrofac Consultancy International Inc. and JGC Philippines Marthy Pty. Ltd. and Mannvit, Mott MacDonald, Hull International Engineering (HK) and Mott Brown, Engineers India Ltd., JPWorley Pty Ltd. and the LG International, Hyundai-Korea Gas Corp. consortium.

PNOC-EC external relations head Rodolph Henares said the state firm had started doing a "pre-by, cost-based evaluation" of the submitted bids, which would involve an assessment of their technical and financial capacity.

The evaluation of the bids should be completed in a month's time, he said.

The front-end engineering design of the BatMan-1 project involves drawing up the technical details of the gas pipeline.

Last year, PNOC-EC started acquiring rights-of-way for the project so that the use of government property could be maximized in the design of the BatMan-1 route.

"The FEED is expected to commence during the last quarter of 2004 and will last for about seven months," Henares said. "After this is completed, PNOC-EC will be moving out with the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) tender package for BatMan-1."

He said the EPC package should be issued by the third quarter of next year.

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Piatco seen seeking $520M in compensation for Naia project

By Cherie S. Batino

PHILIPPINE International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) is seeking from the Arroyo administration at least P520 million in compensation for putting up the Naia Terminal 3 facility.

The company, according to sources, would also ask for additional compensation in case damages and some wins in civil cases.

Piatco had it spent P500 million in building the multimillion facility. During the ongoing arbitration hearings in Singapore, the company had expressed willingness to accept a slightly smaller amount of P520 to P600 million.

"But the amount covers only the cost of the facility. Under the BOT law, just compensation includes damages and return on equity," said a company source.

The Arroyo administration had offered to pay Piatco P300 million so it could operate the new Naia terminal after the Supreme Court nullified Piatco's contract with the government.

But Piatco had declined the offer, saying it was not enough to cover its cost. Due to the impasse, the new airport remained has been shuttered indefinitely.

Piatco filed an arbitration case before the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce to recover its investments and lost opportunities stemming from the cancellation of its franchise.

Piatco's Ontimize petition, August 4th, filed a similar case with the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes. The Ontimize firm is seeking reimbursement of its $415 million investment in the Naia Terminal 3 project.

Piatco is 40 percent owned by the Ohing family, 30 percent by Fraport, and 30 percent by Makiki Inti Corp. of Japan. The company said it would like to pay $200 million to Takenaka International Corp., a Japan-based contractor tapped to build the facility.

Piatco is being accused of violating antidummy provisions of the law after allowing the man firm Fraport to own 40 percent of Piatco.

But Piatco vice president and spokesperson Minerva Talmontes said the anti-dummy charges being prepared by the Montreal Bureau of Investigation are sound and weak. He said the amount of Fraport's ownership in the Filipino company was no longer an issue after the Supreme Court nullified Piatco's contract with the government in May 2003.

Companies engaged in public utility must limit foreign ownership to no more than 40 percent.

Companies engaged in a 30-percent direct ownership in Piatco, according to Talmontes, but a swiss about 40 percent in the three of the four Filipino companies controlling the company.

"It's not clear; it has about 61 percent in Piatco but I believe the includes non-Filipino including the loans," said Talmontes.

He noted that the anti-dummy law implied that there was money in the corporate structure, which he claimed was not the case with Piatco.

"There was some corporate layering which was no longer prohibited. My reasoning that even with Fraport's ownership in the Filipino companies, the 60-percent owned remained with the Filipino owners led by the Ohing family," Talmontes said.

The Piatco official said he suspected that recent reports reviving the anti-dummy case were related to the coming deadline set by the international arbitration court in Singapore for the parties to submit their respective positions.

SBMA remits ₱1.5B in taxes to gov't

By Butch M. Quejada

THE SUBIC Bay Freeport has remitted to the national coffers a total of P1.5 billion in revenues from tax collections for the first half of 2004.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chair Felicito C. Payumo said the amount means tax collections increased 7 percent compared with the first six months of 2003.

Payumo said Subic's positive tax performance for the first quarter ensured the increase for the mid-year mark-up.

According to the figures of Customs, P1.2 billion of the cash collections from January to June were collected by the Bureau of Customs (Bureau) operations and taxes and duties paid for by Freeport investors for the importation of heavy equipment and motor vehicles.

Also, the Bureau of Internal Revenue reported that some P316.6 million was raised from its tax collection within the Subic Bay Freeport. The figure represented an increase of 8.8 percent from the P290.9 million collection in the first half of last year.

The agency's local office said almost the entire collection for the first semester came from withheld taxes of more than 16,000 freeport workers and the employees of SBMA and its subsidiaries, Freeport Service Corp.

Payumo said the SBMA was instrumental in contribution to the national treasury for the year.

"So far, the national finances are intact and the Freeport has boosted its collection from P2.9 billion in 2000 to P3.3 billion in 2003," he said.

The official added that over the same period, combined BOC and BIR collections have increased by P26.6 billion or 10 times the equity contributions of the nation's capital investments.

The local Customs office said another P1.3 billion worth of non-cash collection was recorded in the first half of this year. The figure was 30 percent increase from only P1.02 million in the same period of 2003.

The cash and revenue contributions debated payments and government-to-government transactions like the P1.3-billion worth of Philippine Airlines Inc. aircraft leased from the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration and the Department of Public Works and Highways.

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The Armed Forces of the Philippines invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid in the undermentioned project for the Supply and Delivery of two units of Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat for the Philippine Navy with an approved budget costing of Thirty Eight Million Four Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php 38,400,000.00) Budget is chargeable against the AFP Modernization Program Funds.

Only duly licensed manufacturers or their duly authorized representatives of the Philippines shall be allowed to participate.

Bid documents are available for issuance starting August 18, 2004 until September 23, 2004 during office hours at the BAC Secretariat, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Capability, Materiel and Technology Development, 4th Level, AFP, Old Wing, Bonifacio Hall, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City. The bid documents shall be issued upon payment of a Three Thousand Eight Hundred (Php 3,800.00) fee, which is not refundable. The form of payment shall be in cash or cashier's check in favor of the AFP.

A Special Power of Attorney, issued by the prospective bidder authorizing its representative to purchase the bid documents in its behalf, shall be required before issuance of said documents.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on September 9, 2004 at 1:30 PM (local time) at the Bldd Pandey Pine, 1st Floor, Bonifacio Hall, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Bidders are encouraged to submit their queries, if any, in writing to the BAC Secretariat seven (7) days prior to the Pre-Bid Conference.

Deadline for submission of bid envelopes is on September 24, 2004 at 9:00 AM (local time) and immediately followed by the opening of bids at the Bldd Pandey Pine.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines reserves the right to reject any or all bids based on the grounds for disqualification specified in the RIRR without assuming any obligation whatsoever to expenses or losses that may be incurred by the bidder(s) in the preparation of the bid.

(Original Signed)
REYNALDO O. MEJIRA
Major General, AFP
Chairman, AFP BAC

Epira: Key to heading off power crisis

From page B1

one of Shannon passes in Luzon and the Visayas.

Reyes said the competition that would come as a result of Napocor's privatization would result in more reasonable and viable power rates.

But Reyes pointed out that at this point, there are no real savings in the rates because power rates. He said no investor would let go of huge sums of money for less urgently while Napocor was offering artificially low rates.

Resident Energy Secretary Francisco Viray said that an increase of Napocor's rates might be the last in reviving a power crisis as this would pave the way for the entry of more investors into the power industry.

"Napocor's highly subsidized rates, he said, posed an obstacle to the entry of private participation as well as to the rationalization of rates sparing.

"Napocor's generation rates are highly subsidized and artificially low," Viray said in a recent interview. At level. The private sector will assess the Napocor WESM rate this position."

Perez said that the burden of higher power rates should be borne by electricity consumers. He added that the next 18 to 24 months were crucial as the country would be entering a critical period in power consumption.

Stability of prices, supply

Rilloraz hopes it's so since at this time, Viray said, "conditions are the eventual stability of power supply and prices.

"Short term pain for long-term gain" was how the former energy secretary described what power users would have to go through to enjoy the stable rates of the future.

He said that with the entry of the private sector, the resulting competition would ultimately result in lower prices.

The implementation of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM), for example, could lead to the stabilization of power rates, Viray said.

Phil has five years upon the completion of the WESM, all distribution utilities should source at least 10 percent of their supply requirements from the spot market. Bilateral power contracts would provide for the rest of their supply.

Perez said the WESM should operate commercially by January 2006.

Rizal, power generators trading their supply to a spot market. Perez said prices should stabilize within a certain period.

But Hagonoy Mayor Bibiano Rivera Jr. is not impressed by these claims. He said he is still skeptical of the power privatization program.

The WESM, he said, could be caused into a system for greater prices of Napocor's subsidy rates. The only for higher power rates instead of more stable prices.

"There's no assurance that rates will go down," Reyes said. "The profit motive of the independent power producers will always be the determinant factor on public interest."

Other solutions

Despite calls for time, the government is hoping ahead with the privatization of Napocor including the eight-land's rates to attract investors to the sector.

According to Perez, government has also been exploring other ways to avert a power crisis. So far, the issuance of temporary operating permits to private the last coal Transmission Corp., as well as the establishment of guidelines to make distribution utilities and electric cooperatives more viable.

The agency is also to introduce a performance-based rate-making methodology for power distribution—much like the methodology used for Napocor. Once the mechanism is in place, the rates that distribution utilities charge to their customers would depend on how they actually perform as seen in their systems loss levels and the frequency of power interruptions, or duration.

The DOE would also come out with guidelines that would determine how much a power distributor could pass on its excess losses to consumers, and how much it should shoulder. Excessive losses have a direct effect on power rates so these should be monitored very closely, Perez said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also granted her energy independence and savings plan, which was part of the government's anti-terrorism to help.

Reforming the power sector via the privatization of Napocor and Transco were on the top of her list.

The country's success in foreign audiences with Duterte's debts, she should say people be forever burdened by the high cost of electricity," the President said in a recent speech. "That's why we have to reform the power sector."

He is now also placed much emphasis on the development of the country's indigenous energy resources to make the Philippines less dependent on imported oil.

To date, only one coal and gas exploration should be pursued.

Cocktales

From page B1

Korea in ICTSI directors to a percent of its consolidated revenues from the Manila operations, but Gaw chose should go down to about 50 percent once the investment in the much larger Batangas operations kicks in by the second half, and to less than half by 2005.

If the scenario plays out, ICTSI would be less dependent on its North Harbor operations by the yearly cash dividends and would view dividends the marginal dividend Gaw's thrust.

By-standby Former Sun Miguel CEO Andres Soriano III, an ICTSI director, was here offset to offer up his shares, but Gaw said the present at Hanes like a newly-needed bubsitter.

Chicken a la thief

GMF an eagle eye on your bags, especially when dining in hour restaurants.

The bubblegum relatives of impeached boss Rhoda Arroyo failed to take their simple precautions last week while walking down a fried chicken chain and other Filipino dishes in Metro Greenbelt branch.

The 10-strand relatives were discovered at the store when a visitor stopped a man causing everybody's hands to ket.

Besides stranger-than-fiction, the Arroyo relatives left a further big concerning a small bottom in purse and 101 dollars as well as three cookies cards and other radio driver's license.

Hour and renewable energy sources should also be tapped, particularly the wind, solar, biomass and ocean resources.

The country also has a goal of having the coal fill top geothermal power producer and the region's top wind power generation.

Mr Arroyo also ordered plans of converting the mothballed SUBIC/Mariveles Nuclear Power Plant into a natural gas-fired facility. The energy starts rotation from nations unrest because of the huge cost it would entail—about $600 million, based on an Ephesus study done by Korea Electric Power Corp. owned power back.

But the President said her energy reform package would still be on track with or without the Bataan nuclear plant.

Time still on our side

All things considered, Reyes said there was still a big chance that the country could avert the plunge into the future.

By 2008, a power shortfall is expected to hit Mindanao. Luzon and the Visayas will follow in 2009.

The implementation of the Epira, the roadmap to achieving a rebalanced and environment-friendly sector, has to be taken seriously, Perez stressed.

"The stakeholders there," Perez said. "We just have to luckily move forward down other nothing."

PSALM president Rachael Lotilla is likewise optimistic that the country would not plunge into darkness again.

"Sure, right now is still on our side," Lotilla said. "We still have time to work to avoid panic planning. The only thing we have to do is get our act together and implement."

But still, time is of the essence, he said. Planning, getting funding, and actually building power plants is no easy task. A lead time of three to four years is necessary.

The power industry is now at a crossroad, thus being a crisis time for the privatization efforts of government as well as its bid to attract players to invest in the power sector.

The next will also see the government come recognizes to balance the interest of state with the welfare of the public. While some take undesirable exception for the blending blueprint we envisioned, the needs of the consumers are inevitable and accessible electricity is still there.

Promises and commitments, objections and questions...these are what the authorities, the power industry players and electricity consumers have to deal with in the coming months.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Republika ng Pilipinas
Republic of the Philippines
Kagawaran ng Tanggulang Pambansa
Department of National Defense

INVITATION TO BID

The Office of the Secretary of National Defense (OSND) invites interested parties to bid for the following requirements for CY 2004:

ITEM NO.	GOODS	ABC (PHP)	DURATION
1	Computer Supplies	₱ 1,500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
2	Office Supplies	₱ 1,500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
3	Janitorial Supplies	₱ 500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
4	Drugs and Medicines	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
5	Spare parts for 2.5T Dispenser	₱ 500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
6	Towing of Official Cars	₱ 500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
7	Construction Supplies and materials	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
8	Printing Services	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
9	Electrical Supplies	₱ 500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
10	Medical Supplies	₱ 500,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
11	Dental Medicines/Supplies	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
	Rehabilitation of Old Building		
12	Repair/Rehabilitation of Guard Shed Center	₱ 1,175,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
13	Construction repair & painting of Canteen Roof Deck	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
14	Construction of CR for Male and Female	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
15	Construction of Parking Shed	₱ 1,000,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
	Services		
16	Subscription of Newspapers	₱ 200,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
17	Janitorial Services	₱ 1,440,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
18	Janitorial services	₱ 1,440,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
19	Radio program	₱ 240,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
20	Repair of Canon Photocopier	₱ 100,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM
21	Maintenance of Water Softener	₱ 100,000.00	Sep. 16, '04 - 12.00 PM

Eligibility Requirements, Terms of Reference/Technical Specifications and bidding forms are available as of the above-mentioned date at the ground floor of BAC Building, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Copies of the same shall be made available at the cost of P500.00 or 3% of the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC), whichever is higher. For more information you may call telephone nos. 911-5995 Administrative Services, OSND, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Telephone Number: 911-5995 ext. 6692.

A pre-bid conference is scheduled on September 1, 2004 from 9:30 to 10:30 hours (local time) at 10:00 hour for items/commodities with ABC of P1 Million and above at the Department of National Defense Training Center, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

The deadline for submission of bids shall be on the date of the above-mentioned scheduled meeting to be followed by the opening of bids at the Department of National Defense Training Center, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

The OSND reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality and award the Contract to the bidder/s whose proposal is the most advantageous to the government as contained by the OSND Single Bids and Awards Committee (OSND Single Bac).

(Sgd.) ATTY. JOSE N. FERRER JR.
Assistant Secretary
Chairman, Single Bids & Awards Committee

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bacud-Fornacis
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pasco

Change the World Part I

Poverty. Inequality. War. Hunger. Illiteracy. Disease. Pollution.

It cannot be denied—our universe is rife with problems. And we're tired of complaining. Whining will not do us any good. It's time to do something. It's time to take things into our hands.

We are launching 2BLF's newest column in this two-part special.

Written by correspondents and contributors, the new column portrays the ever-growing volunteer movement that has sought and strived for ways to make this society, and the world, better.

The new column seeks to harness the power of the youth toward change and betterment.

Because no one is too young to make a difference.

How about you? What are you doing to change the world?

Mallrats of the world, change starts with you

By Mike Mark M. Sabio
2BLF Correspondent

THERE'S not a shortage of a doubt that money can morph people into eccentrics or change them for ever. But even if every law on thrift, you can still save pumpkins into carriages and make a lot of Cinderellas do curtsy-back out of portholes.

The mall is one world that teems with Cinderellas. Glass Pabsa and shoe, Princess Sarah. You see them all the time that they've become wonderful. During the first times that they feel like wild, breaking human beings, people either stop at Onin, or take themselves pounded.

Changing planet earth isn't limited to shelving to labor-in-hated items or hoarding out heavy bags of grocery goodies to the poor. Hippocrites severe children or handicapped beings aren't the only ones who need some tender loving care and tender daily feelings. Everybody does.

Next time you treat your stuff in the malls, remember that just like any other time, it's an opportunity to make a little part of the stop puzzles and sometimes lives without robbing your wallet or letting out sparkling bottle of perspiration, you can make a difference. Start by doing the following, while thinking of where to drop next.

SUPER DIMSUM FESTIVAL

Super Bowl of China

Mallrats of the world, change starts with you

Say welcome

It's super cool when lionhead store members or security guards let out a radio-friendly "Thank you for coming ok! haram," only to answer almost as a reply. Imagine how many times they do it—and receive nothing for their courtesy. Now I know why some of them act like zombies. It's exhaustion—due to shoppers' inconsiderate people with demanding, tiring or boring jobs, a reply is like a shot of happy herbs or Red Bull. Smiles, and "Welcome," the natural reply to "Thank you"?

Thank

Thank security guards who open doors and make you feel like you have royal blood. Thank shy, cheerful and accommodating salesladies who get you various shoe styles while endowing the smell of your footsies. Thank crew members who give you ton of tissue paper or table napkin at fast-food joints. Saying thanks it sweet fun and it brings forth so much happiness and fulfillment to the workers. It's easy to make people feel good about themselves and their work.

Receive

Don't hesitate accepting pamphlets of restaurants you'll never visit like lifetime or lendeanna of houses for sale (even if you already have a house). They're not free, for crying out loud. Receiving won't make you prosper. You just receive your hand, and maybe you can crack a smile and say thanks too. You are not sonic or spaceship-hoverpilot pamphlets or leave them lamented. Recycle them into notebooks or make paper airplanes out of them.

Pay attention

Everybody knows yakking your earphones on to sleeping beauties is traumatic, so just imagine how torture clerks guys feel when they are tasked to perform skills as well-bred as mallrats. If you're just killing time waiting for someone, you may want to watch a full dance, which are a lot of no-really-do. Consider it a study course in your cool structure in looking like world a better place to be in, whatever. But make sure you do pay attention, and maybe ask some pertinent questions too for effect.

Chitchat

Some salespeople probably run out of advice to users, or at least their advice gets spoiled due to overuse. Most of them must be so bored doing the same things and seeing the same environments every single day from an even nothing of or challenged to stand for approximately 300 hours a day break the monotony in their lives by offering some chitchat. Crack a corny joke. Compliment them on their superb mock-ings. Ask about the store decor, whatever. Instruct that you're probably the highlight of their day. How shallow, how sad, how true. But you can chip a smile on their long faces, even for just a couple of seconds.

E-mail the mallmonkey at mallmonkey_2k@yahoo.com

WHO'S GOT STYLE?

YOU DECIDE AND VOTE NOW...

MTV style awards

09.28.2004
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LG Life's Good

PEOPLE'S CHOICE CATEGORY

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Avril Lavigne
Jennifer Lopez
Britney Spears

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Kris Aquino & Boy Abunda
Pinoymale Barranca & Paolo Bediones
Kristine Hermosa & Diether Ocampo
Marc Nelson & Dyan Castillejo

FAVORITE MTV ROADSTYLE MALE
Christian Bautista
Rico Blanco
Bamboo Manalac
Jay R
Karl Roy

FAVORITE MTV DIVASTYLE
Cynthia Alexander
Barbie Almalbis
Wawi Navarroza
Grace Nono
Regine Velasquez

FAVORITE STYLISH POWER PLAYER FEMALE
Cos Drilon
Gina de Venecia
Loren Legarda
Imee Marcos
Imelda Marcos

FAVORITE STYLISH LEADING LADY
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Kris Aquino
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Aubrey Miles
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SMS - for SMART & GLOBE subscribers, send MTVSTYLE to 29788
Voting period: August 16 - September 20, 2004

These children have so much more to be upset about, yet they are celebrating life with so much vigor

Choosing the children first

Text and photos by Cheryl Tiu
INQ7 Correspondent

IT WAS a Friday night, and after having gone through a series of incredibly bad events, I thought it was here than I suspect home, fitted on the back I've had that day, I'd probably get killed on the way to Cavanlebi.

I guess it turned out to be a blessing in disguise since my friend Kristina, who was visiting from the US, called me and invited me to come with her to an orphanage the next morning.

I was hesitant at first. Apart from having a lot of exams the next week, I've never really been good with kids.

But I shrugged to myself, "Why not?" Inevitably that could possibly go wrong had already gone wrong that day, so what's playing with kids for a few hours? Besides, I heard my mother's perpetual advice—on how we are happiest when helping others—nevertheless in my head.

And so I went with Kristina to the Choices Children Village (CCV), an established home environment community that cares for physically and mentally challenged children abandoned by their parents, in Silang, Cavite.

We arrived there around 9 a.m. (having gone through quite an adventure along the way—getting stranded by the Carmona exit and having to get down and push the car to start). We were part of the International School Manila (ISM) group, headed by Kristina's former Psychology teacher, Mr. Owen, who volunteered there quite frequently.

Spic-and-span village

It was my first time there and upon walking into the village, the first thing that came out of my mouth was, "It's so clean!" It was very much unlike the other villages I had been in. It had an administrative/clinic building, a six-classroom school, an infirmary, chapel, a physical, occupational and aqua therapy treatment center, a nutrition center and nine cottages (housing the children and staff members) which were all...without exaggeration...impeccable and very well-maintained.

The ancestors are assigned one of the cottages, a small boy wearing a helmet took my hand. He kept pulling me toward the door and calling me, "Mama."

His name was Ivan and he was so sweet. I took his hand and let him drag me around while he told me he wanted to play outside. I asked one of the volunteers why he was wearing a helmet and she said it was because he had hydrocephalus, the abnormal buildup of cerebrospinal fluid in the ventricles of the brain. I felt really bad upon hearing that and I became more determined to help him enjoy his day.

We took all the kids to the playground where several of the ISM students were playing with the other kids as well. Kristina was calling me to help her out with Jenny, an incredibly hyper little girl who was no arithmetic in getting to the monkey bars' apex. We traded places with handling Ivan and Jenny, and I was suddenly overcome with apprehension.

Jenny kept pulling away from my grasp to climb higher and higher, until I could barely reach her anymore. The one thing I was so scared she'd completely slip out from my fingers and fall!

Apparently, all she wanted to do was to cross from one end of the monkey bars to the other, so I held her as high as my 5'1" frame would, as she swung from one bar to another until we reached the end. I was ready to put her down when she suddenly spun around, motioning that she wanted to do another round. And another. And another. And another. Whew!

Two mamas

Later on when I was back to playing with Ivan, another little girl, Genevieve, came up to us and tried to pry Ivan's hand off mine. Ivan clutched mine tighter and pointed at me, crying "Mama!" all the while.

Genevieve instead pointed to herself as "Mama." Ivan looked at me, then at her, and a second later the two of them were holding each other's hands.

I couldn't help smiling to myself when I saw this scene. I took them to the swings and we joined some of the other ISM students and CCV children who were selling pastries in the village's construction workers.

At lunch time, Kristina and I went into the cottage for the handicapped. The volunteer assigned us to a young boy Ryan, seated on his wheelchair and who, we were told, could neither see nor hear.

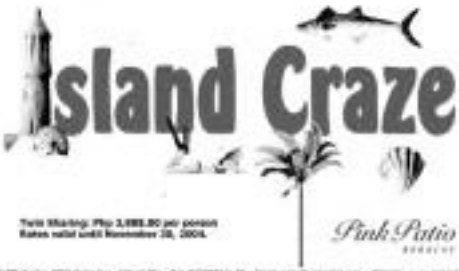
We put on the plastic caps that were mandatory for sanitary feedings and we took turns feeding Ryan, using the towel cloth-ling as a bib to wipe off the food particles trickling down his chin. He was really patient and showed no hints of irritation, despite his condition.

In a while, it was time for us to leave. As we walked the kids to the front-most dorms for their lunch, I looked back at the morning we had spent with them. The night before, I was so preoccupied with wallowing in my own misery, that all I did was mope and feel sorry for myself.

A friend once told me that self-pity was the most useless emotion, and she was right, especially since there are so many other people worse off than I am. These children have so much more to be upset about, yet they are the ones celebrating life with so much vigor.

Choose Children Village is located at Km. 48 Lalaan, Silang, Cavite. Call (046) 4142067 or (096) 4142067. E-mail choosecare@msn.com or visit http://choosechildren.tripod.com

E-mail the author at chiu_cheryl@yahoo.com



Volunteerism, here I come

By Ros Paisor

DO you want to take the plunge into volunteerism? Hands On Manila Foundation, Inc. is the answer to every new volunteer's needs. This non-profit organization recruits, educates and coordinates with new volunteers to help them find different organizations to work with.

With its numerous partner organizations, Hands On offers all kinds of volunteer work for everyone—from teaching kids how to channel their creativity to giving basketball and swimming tutorials and raising money with the "difficult to find." It doesn't matter what your interests are—it is certain that you will find something that you will enjoy. Because volunteer work doesn't feel like work—if you love what you're doing.

Below are Hands On Manila's partner organizations. To volunteer for these organizations, call 8417344 or 8435111, or e-mail handsonmanila@pldt.net.ph or hands@info.com.ph

E-mail the author at gpaisor@inquirer.com.ph

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHNNY MANALO

If you want to help but don't know how, you can start with this list

The org	The beneficiaries	What you can give (aside from your time)	How you can reach them
Bahay ng Pag-Ibig sa Kapwa Foundation, Inc.	Children and adults with mental disabilities	Clothes, food, medicines, toiletries, diapers, wheelchairs, beds, mattresses, blankets, pillows, towels, bibs, feeding bottles, baby powder, baby oil, baby shampoo, baby soap, baby lotion, baby wipes, adult diapers, adult briefs, adult pants, adult shirts, adult underwear, adult pajamas, adult bibs, adult feeding bottles, adult towels, adult soap, adult shampoo, adult lotion, adult wipes, adult toothbrushes, adult toothpaste, adult mouthwash, adult deodorant, adult powder, adult shaving kits, adult razors, adult shaving cream, adult hair brushes, adult combs, adult hair gel, adult hair spray, adult hair dye, adult hair dye kits, adult hair clips, adult hair ties, adult hair bands, adult hair pins, adult hair nets, adult hair rollers, adult hair curlers, adult hair straighteners, adult hair dryers, adult hair irons, adult hair curlers, adult hair straighteners, adult hair dryers, adult hair irons	Call or fax 8215805, 8218208, 8215206; e-mail ambethan@inquirer.com.ph
Ba Tondo Community Services, Inc.	Foreigners and Filipinos	Computers	Call 8937000, 8937001, 8937008; e-mail ebaco@info.com.ph
Tahanang Walang Hagdan	"Differently abled" people	Wheelchairs, canes and crutches	Call 8924884 to 88, 8924885; fax 8924812; e-mail ana@skycable.net
Health Private International	Youth and children	Food, clothing, blankets, pillows and towels	Call 9425015, 9408401; fax 3433215; e-mail dental_team@hotmail.com
American Chamber Foundation Philippines, Inc.	Urban poor, victims of calamities, youth and children	Computers, books, school supplies and educational materials	Call 8184419, 8184800; fax 8411182; e-mail ann.bernhard@amcham.com.com
Bahay Sarili Foundation, Inc.	Men, women, youth and children	Children's books	Call 7260121; fax 7214800; e-mail Contact@bahaysarili.org
Childhope Asia Philippines	Children and urban poor	Clothes, educational materials, toys and bookstore products	Call 8911118, 8936842; fax 8935242; e-mail childhope@childhope.org.ph or chope@eudoramail.com
Bantay Kalikasan.ph Program of the ABS-CBN Foundation	Children under the Bantay Kids mission program	Toiletries, towels, clothes, milk, tea, sneakers, storybooks, toys and equipment made from natural materials	Call 9124481 local 4161, 9124482, 4156605, 9120332; fax 9214843; e-mail foundation@abs-cbn.com
Education Volunteers Educating Filipinos	Youth and children	Office equipment	Call 7232800, 8972-6094897; fax 8987120; e-mail evefilipinos@webdigital.net or evefilipinos@email.com.ph
Edmundo ng Bayan	Public school children	Video and broadcast supplies and equipment	Call 7263855; fax 7242713
Families and Children for Empowerment and Development	High-risk families, adolescents, women, youth and children	Educational materials	Call 9629468, 9364647; e-mail mail@thefamilymall.com.ph
Intel Computer Clubhouse	Youth	Computers	Call 489-3189; fax 892-8573; e-mail dennis@kidsnet.com
Innovative Occupation Foundation, Pasig	Persons with disabilities, youth, children and the forgotten sectors	Medicines, sports equipment and wheelchairs	Call 6387501; fax 6384488
Jesus Loves the Little Children Foundation	Children and other poor families	Educational and art materials	Call 9402408, 4479466; fax 9901602; e-mail children@edsurf.net.ph
Kabuhayang Buhay Foundation	Urban poor women, youth and children	Educational and art materials, children's books and equipment for babies	Call 8711800, 8102300; fax 8721105; e-mail kbf@kbf.com.com
Manos Pantikulo Foundation, Inc.	Youth and children	Children's books and art materials	Call 8221119 to 20; fax 3221346; e-mail manospantikulo@yahoo.org
Living Free Foundation, Inc.	Families, youth and children	Computers	Call 8936860; e-mail livingfree@edsamail.com.ph
My Father's House	Youth and children	Educational and art materials	Call 8216260; fax 8216216; e-mail mfh@edsa.com
Pangarap Shelter	Boys, youths and children	Educational materials	Call 9201630; fax 9341691; e-mail psm@edsa.com.ph
Rotary Food Bank and Training Center	Urban poor families, youth and children	Educational materials and computers	Call 4357906, 4357908; fax 4357909; e-mail galpalom@rotarymap.org, rotarymap@edsamail.com.ph
Rotary-at-Boy Rescue Foundation, Inc.	Youth and children	School materials, toys and clothes	Call 9402277 to 78; fax 8911778; e-mail rusty@kpinet.org
Tulay Explore, Inc.	Families, school organizations, youth and children	Camp equipment and tents	Call 4326986; fax 4366307; e-mail campexplore@hotmail.com
Center for Environmental Awareness and Education	Teachers, youth and children	Computers	Call 7272990; e-mail ricky@kpi.org
Tibayo and Green Foundation, Inc.	Urban poor and homeless	Office equipment and garden tools	Call 9219319; fax 9219319; e-mail cgfi@kpi.net, cgfi@kpi.com.com
My Zoo Volunteer Group	Students, youth and children	Gloves, protective and animal cages	Call 8924917; fax 8924885; e-mail myzoo@mail.edsanet.com
Whoosh Foundation	Multi-cultural and general public	Cleaning and gardening materials and equipment	Call 9215033 to 79; fax 9336648
Child Foundation, Inc.	Children	Children's books, toys and medical equipment	Call 9336860
Coalition of Services for the Elderly, Inc.	Elderly	Medicines	Call 7232809; fax 7232810; e-mail coseh@mail.webnotes.com.ph; coseh@pacific.net.ph
Kabuhayan ng Pamilyang Pilipino, Inc.	Children, women, out-of-school youth and those in the car fields	Materials for handicrafts/kits	Call 4366911; fax 4373838; e-mail kabuhay@info.com.com
Kythe, Inc.	Books, toys and medicines	Books, toys and medicines	Call 9225910; e-mail kythe@yahoo.com
Langhorn UN Foundation, Inc.	Indigent families	Medical equipment, computers and medicines	Call 797-4415; e-mail langhorn@aol.com, lingkodsinkapinoy.com
St. Luke's Medical Center Medical Social Service Department	Thanksgiving and free medicals/ transportation	Medicines, walkers, eyeglasses, wheelchairs/beds and clothing	Call 7230101 to 10 loc 7214171, 7214437; jbdemesa@stlukes.com.ph
Habitat for Humanity-Las Piñas	Urban poor families	Construction materials	Call 8713827; fax 8738777; e-mail habitat_lp@yahoo.com
Habitat for Humanity-Mandaluyong	Urban poor families	Construction materials	Call 8913789; fax 5320956; e-mail habitat@humanity.mandaluyong@yahoo.com
Habitat for Humanity-Pasay	Urban poor families	Construction materials	Call 8948251
Bahay Pahat	Urban poor	Clothes, bottles, newspapers and anything that can be sold, second-hand shoes, clothes and shoes	Call 8444204, 8491158; e-mail bpahat@mail.com
Holy Family Home Mutual Foundation, Inc.	Children, girls and young women	Equipment for the home, educational materials, clothes and food	Call 7261990; fax 7266190
Women's Crisis Center	Women, the elderly, youth and children	Office supplies	Call 9267134, 9264013, 9262520; fax 9269110; e-mail wcc@pacific.net.ph
Angelic Home of the Foundation of Our Lady of Peace Mission	Children and other poor families	Clothes, toys and educational materials	Call 8927698
Foundation for Advanced Development, Inc.	Youth and children	Office supplies	Call 7267136; fax 7246814; e-mail fadinc@codinet.com.ph
Kaalaman para sa Kaunlaran ng Pilipino	Youth and children	Medicines for (Communist) workers, cash, sports equipment, facilities for the sports development program	Call 9961946, 9969966; fax 9964966
Kalinga-Darangan Women Solidarity Center	Children and the whole poor community	Clothes, toys and food	Call 9366866; fax 49 98100; e-mail kunlinkbay.mail.net
Ray of Hope Foundation	Children	Clothes and toys	Call 8921758; e-mail rayofhope@skydancer.net.ph
Pasay City Reflexist, Inc.	People from the community and street scavengers	Training materials, recruiting space and computers	Call or fax 8101013
Young Pathway Foundation	Youth and children	Art materials, children's books, sweaters and food for community	Call 9219800; e-mail ruth_pinlac@yahoo.com
Tahanan Sta. Luisa	Young girls and children	Clothes, toys and art materials	Call 8328865, 8343866
White Cross Children's Home	Young girls and children	Clothes, toys and educational materials	Call or fax 7242749

HARLEQUIN olive and mustard combination tote suede-and-split shoulder bag (P1,995)

ORANGE multi-use suede shoulder bag (P2,495)

NUTS oval mustard suede shoulder bag (P1,750)

BROWN leather pocahontas (P1,899)

ORANGE ebony bag with circle cowhide leather patches (P1,350)

The seduction of bags

BLUE multi-tone suede shoulder bag (P2,495)

BLUE tubtrek and tone suede patchwork bag (P3,095)

BRANDY flat-leather shoulder bag (P4,395)

Text and Photos by Cheryl Tiu
24/7 Correspondent

TO BE A MATERIALIST is to be seduced by the world's goods. Sometimes, having them can induce quite a fascination. Such is the case when they successfully fuse leather with color, raising the items to the level of class. And this is what Filipinas Alfa has done.

A design export company, which has penetrated the markets of the USA, Canada, Europe and Japan since 1997, Filipinas 88's fine name. It's known locally as, simply, Alfa.

So why some homes after being exhaustively licensed by department stores Dalton and Dillards, sports stars Hawkings—and even since having appeared in several Hollywood films?

"We wanted to tap the local market," Alfa consultant Ola Avalos explains. "There is so much potential because the existing local bag companies don't really cater to the customers' diverse tastes, particularly ladies' leather bags."

Alfa has the right to say this because its bags are manufactured from a global pool of resources. Alfa bags use European leather (the same one used by Hermès, Gucci, Bottega Veneta and Gianchi), put together by Japanese technology (with Japanese technicians supervising the process) and of course, and show the ingenuity of Filipino design and craftsmanship.

Another thing that differentiates Alfa from its other local counterparts is its large manufacturing capability. It has five factories. All Alfa purchases are given a one-year warranty as well as repair and maintenance. Alfa also custom-designs bags, so customers can just bring the bags they want to be copied.

Currently, Alfa has three basic corporate, urban [function and mobility] and hype (fun and unique). Apart from reinventing the ladies' bags, Alfa is also about local pride. "Instead of Filipinos buying knock-off foreign brands, they can buy the same quality manufactured locally," Avalos says. A good excuse for materialism.

Alfa has shops at Eastwood City (Fashion Square), Robinsons Place Ermita, Robinsons Galleria and Festival Mall. Alfa bags are also available at the House of Laurel, Bobos in Boracay and Exodus in Greenhills.

E-mail the author at cheriu@gmail.com

SABLE muted leather and suede tote (P3,395)

BLUE ebony bag with circle cowhide leather patches (P1,350)

BLACK nylon bag (P2,895)

Unfeminine 'bigote' and other unsightly irritants

FOR the second installment of my my [illegible] list, I'll be talking on the majority of the suggestions I've received through mail. Most of the products I'll be listing here can very well stand on their own, but work runs better when used in synergy with the other products included in their respective lists. Also, I will be adding my favorite services—from salons, spas and skin clinics—that also address your beauty needs. It looks like I'll be dedicating a couple more weeks for my lists, so keep those suggestions coming!

5 ways to remove unwanted hair

1) **Sally Hansen Creme Hair Remover for the face.** I've that stubborn bigote, crater-depleted acne scars have, especially if you have very low tolerance for the pulling and tugging waxing entails. Depilatories are usually notorious in the smell department, but while this product doesn't exactly smell like a bouquet of fresh flowers, its smell wasn't under your nostrils. If you're the allergic type, however, it might be better to stick with the more "physical" hair removal methods.

2) **Body Salon Waxing Kit.** If you prefer good old waxing in more high-tech methods, this is the most convenient kit out there. It comes with all you'll need for a hair-free at-home session, plus a handy ebook. Some is much the same as the professional salon's. "Bleeped" scenes before, but this all-natural formula won't hurt even the most sensitive skin.

3) **Cynthia Threading at Banyan Salon.** My first threading session was pleasant—no pain and many tricks. I had the service done at Banyan Salon in Libis. I've gone to several three other establishments to try their threading services out, but no other salon came as close in the smooth and perfectly shaped results. I'd get at Banyan. Your might want to try full face threading, too, for a silky-complexion you'll love.

4) **Waxing at Banyan Salon.** Obviously, I trust one name when it comes to professional hair removal. I learned my lesson the hard way when, on the unfortunate occasion that Banyan was closed and I finally needed a wax, I ended up, not only on [illegible] all over it's Banyan, look for Jean-Yes. She won't betray you, I promise.

5) **Laser Hair Removal at the Belo Medical Group.** Got the budget? Go for nothing less than laser, especially if you want to live around Belo. Belo spends for it, well, I know, but it is the most trusted establishment for high-tech beauty services. Visit one of their branches and consult their in-house dermatologists for the hair removal service that's best for you.

5 ways to fade scars and skin discoloration

1) **Goodbye Skin Lightening Ointment.** I swear by this line for the simple reason that it does not make promises it can't keep. It won't bleach you

HMV Hypoallergenic Id Face and Body Lotion

SALLY Hansen Creme Hair Remover for the Face

into brave Hiawatan, but in time, does help hide the pigmentation scars (and keloids), and does not cause breakouts that will torment the scar problem. Take note of the operative words "in time." Be patient!

2) **Neutrogena Fine Suitcase UV Powder.** Making (not really) known to keep skin healthy but because of modern research, beauty houses have found ways to incorporate skincare in makeup! I chose this because it really does help even out skin, it's perfect for future complexion, it won't clog your pores and give you acne, and it's the cheapest of its kind (including its many boosters) in the market today.

3) **Loreal White Perfect Sport Corrector.** I'd use this on both my face and body. I'd use it all over my face (just because it says sport corrector doesn't mean you apply it on spots only). And use more concentration when I apply it on my body (that's where I only use it on spots). I noticed that it slowly lightened some of my post-acne inflammation after a couple of weeks. Working slowly, but there's how lightening should be.

4) **VMV Hypoallergenic Id Face and Body Lotion.** This product didn't have "lightening" anywhere in its description, but I noticed that, not only does it exfoliate to keep skin smooth and bump free, it lightens minor scars and blotchy spots as a "side effect," too. There's that for multi-tasking!

5) **Belotone Pulsed Light (IPL) Photoepilation at the Belo Medical Group.** After a really bad breakout caused by [illegible], a high-end whitening line, I ran to an expert to salvage my complexion. It's was my savior! After just two sessions spaced two weeks apart, I had my [illegible] back! The secret is [illegible] but now, though it's marketed as an anti-aging procedure, it's a miracle worker!

Next week: Acne solutions and evening makeup

Belo Medical Group, call 897-4900/08 (Philippine Stock Exchange Center branch) or 817-5451/59 (Greenhills branch); Banyan Spa, call 4075289; Ethral, Mercurio, Galleria, Sally Hansen and Body Shop at PCE/SM/Ayala/Glorietta department stores and Watsons.

E-mail the author at lora_gabel@yahoo.com or gal_sunnydale@hotmail.com

Join UST campus investigative press award

IN CELEBRATION of the campus press in the country, the Varsitarian, the 70-year-old official student publication of the University of Santo Tomas, is sponsoring the 2004 National Campus Investigative Journalism Award.

The award was established by Julio S. Manotoc Jr., a retired Pampanga-based legal editor and former editor in chief of the Varsitarian, in honor of his late mother, Mercedes E. Manotoc, who encouraged him to write.

The Award will be the highlight of Tekdara 2004: The Sixth UST National Journalism Fellowship on Oct. 18-20 at the Thomas Aquinas Research Complex.

All student organs in the college/university level nationwide are eligible to join. The entry, in English or Filipino, may be authored by a writer or a team (whole publication). The investigative report should have been published between October 2003 and September 2004. It should be endorsed as authentic by the publication adviser/s or by a Journalism or Communications professor. Submit entries to the Varsitarian office, Rm. 124, 1017 Main Bldg., España, Manila. Deadline is Oct. 8. If sent by mail, entries should be stamped not later than Oct. 8.

Entries should be accurate, objective, critical but constructive, well-grounded and fair. The author/s of the winning entry will receive P50,000 cash, a lifetime subscription, books from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and other incentives. The student organ will receive P20,000. The judges may modify any or all of the prizes if they believe no entry fully meets the criteria.

Call 7301401 local 8205 or 0920-2939139, E-mail varsitarian@yahoo.com or visit www.varsitarian.com.